



## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

The 2012 Theatre Studies written examination was based on the reaccredited *VCE Theatre Studies Study Design 2007–2014*. The examination was presented in question and answer book format. The paper covered five Areas of Study from the study design; all Unit 3 and 4 outcomes except for Unit 4, Area of Study 1 (which is assessed in the Monologue performance examination) were assessed.

- In general, students who understood the underlying concepts of the *VCE Theatre Studies Study Design* handled the examination well.
- Most students answered all questions on the paper.
- Students were given the option to support their written answers for Questions 3 and 4 with hand-drawn illustrations, and most took advantage of this option.
- Question 1 related to the 2012 Unit 3 prescribed playlist. There were five options of plays to choose from.
- Question 2 related to the 2012 Unit 4 prescribed playlist. There were five options of plays to choose from. Students were required to refer to the same play in all three parts of Question 2.
- In Questions 3a. and 4a. students were provided with lines down the right side of the script excerpt where they could annotate their answers.
- A total of 50 marks was available for the paper.

### **Areas of strength and weakness**

#### High-scoring papers demonstrated

- a sophisticated understanding and use of subject-specific language, terminology and expressions
- a high level of skill in explanation, analysis and evaluation
- in Question 1, thorough study of the written playscript as well as the play in performance from the Unit 3 prescribed playlist
- in Question 3, sound working knowledge of how one or more of the following areas of stagecraft could be applied through the stages of production (production planning, production development, production season): direction, stage management, dramaturgy, set design, properties, costume, make-up, sound, lighting, multimedia and promotion (including publicity)
- a high level of skill in developing images and/or ideas from playscripts using areas of stagecraft
- a high level of skill in developing images and/or ideas from stimulus material
- sound knowledge of the ways in which theatrical style(s) can inform the intended meaning of a playscript
- use of specific examples
- a high level of understanding of the ways in which playscripts and contexts pertaining to them can be presented to an audience
- a high level of skill in applying practical and theoretical knowledge from the study to stimulus material in the examination (*VCE Theatre Studies Study Design*, page 31)
- understanding of question requirements.

#### Low-scoring papers demonstrated

- incorrect, little or no use of subject-specific language, terminology and expressions
- little or no understanding of the difference between an explanation, analysis or evaluation
- limited knowledge of areas of stagecraft, the stages of production, theatre style(s) and/or theatrical contexts
- limited application of practical and theoretical knowledge from the study
- limited evidence of students having read the plays from the Unit 3 prescribed playlist
- a lack of sophistication in developing images and/or ideas from playscripts using acting and/or other areas of stagecraft
- little or no understanding of how to annotate diagrams/illustrations
- little understanding of the question requirements; for example, parts of questions were unanswered
- reiteration of the information provided in the stimulus material
- responses that were repetitive or off-task.

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## Advice for students

- Attempt to answer all questions.
- Take note of the particular type of response required in each question, as indicated by words such as 'describe', 'evaluate', 'explain', 'discuss', 'compare', 'analyse' and 'identify', and respond accordingly. It appeared that some students did not understand what was required in an evaluation – when writing an evaluation, appraisal should accompany analytical responses.
- Understand what is required when annotating diagrams/illustrations. When illustrations are used, annotations should add explanatory comments.
- Develop a working vocabulary based on theatrical language, terminology and expressions as pertains to the study.

In answering questions, students chose to write in essay form, point form, report form or any combination thereof. All were considered acceptable, as long as the student addressed the focus of the question and the response was appropriate to the type required; for example, an evaluation or an analysis. Where an explanation or analysis was required, most students wrote their answer in essay format.

The examination contained a detachable insert that contained stimulus materials pertaining to Questions 3 and 4. When responding to these questions students were required to draw on the stimulus materials and the contextual background information that was also provided. For these questions, an excerpt from a playscript was reproduced with accompanying questions. It was clearly noted on the examination paper that no prior knowledge of the play, its contextual background or the stimulus material was required when answering Questions 3 and 4.

## SPECIFIC INFORMATION

**Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.**

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what the answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

### Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	3	2	5	10	19	26	11	11	6	6	5.0

Students were asked to select and answer one of five questions, each of which pertained specifically to one of the plays on the 2012 Unit 3 prescribed playlist. In accordance with Unit 3, Area of Study 3, all students were expected to have attended one of the plays from the 2012 Unit 3 prescribed playlist and to have read the corresponding written playscript. Students were expected to refer to both the play in performance and to the written playscript in their response.

A high-level response was characterised by

- an insightful evaluative response that demonstrated a high level of understanding of the play in production and the written playscript from which it was derived
- inclusion of pertinent references to the written playscript and/or play in performance
- skilful use of appropriate theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

A mid-level response was characterised by

- a satisfactory evaluation that demonstrated an understanding of the play in production and the written playscript from which it was derived
- inclusion of some appropriate examples from the written playscript and/or play in performance
- generally acceptable use of theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

A low-level response was characterised by

- limited or no evaluation and a scant understanding of the play in production, with little or no reference to the written playscript from which it was derived
- difficulty in identifying both strengths and weaknesses of a play in production
- limited use of examples from the written playscript and/or the student referred only to the play in performance
- little or no use of theatrical language, terminology or expressions.



The following example is an excerpt from a high-level response.

## 2. Tribes by Nina Raine

*The context of Tribes involve a family of well educated people in a setting of 'British' society. This was successfully portrayed through the use of set as it referenced the 'two up two down' housing within the playscript through the use of wooden floor in the centre of the stage, representing downstairs while the surrounding black floor represented an upstairs. This was indicated by the acting as David Paterson in his portrayal of the character Daniel positioned himself in the black area and confirmed he was 'upstairs' to his family. The themes of 'family dysfunction' and 'miscommunication' were also effectively portrayed through the use of stagecraft. The use of set created a successful demonstration of 'family dysfunction' by placing the character Billy played by Matthew Watts on a raised hydraulic in the opening scene physically separating himself from his family who were left of stage to convey the 'family dysfunction'. The use of moving trucks under the wooden flooring also succeeded in illustrating this theme as it created a physical divider of the family which became evident in the scene of Sylvia introduction to the family (played by Alison Bell) as the trucks moved Billy as far from the rest of the family as possible on stage. The use of sound design also enhanced the theme of 'miscommunication' as the playscripts directions of using 'white noise' was utilised in moments of Billy's anxiety. The script also incited the use of 'the jungle book' song which succeeded in its impact of conveying miscommunication, by focusing on the words 'I wanna be like you' which were displayed on an LED screen above the stage allowing the audience to understand the impact. However, the differences in performance was the use of 'heavy metal music' rather than bohemian Rhapsody, and the neglect to use 'bach's prelude in E-minor' which proved to be equally as effective as it created a successful use of stillness and silence in moments of miscommunication between the characters.*

*The use of acting in conveying the theme of 'disability' was successful in Watts portrayal of the character Billy. His use of slurred words and broken diction as well as altering volumes effectively portrayed his hearing disability as is referenced by the broken words within the script. However, David Paterson's portrayal of Daniel was unsuccessful in expressing a mental 'disability' as he used clear diction and high volume vocalisation as well as expansive open chested movements which suggested 'normalcy' rather than 'disability' as he is portrayed in the script as 'hearing voices'.*

## Question 2

### 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	19	29	48	2.2

### 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	3	18	38	40	2.2

### 2c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	8	23	38	31	1.9

This question related to the 2012 VCE Theatre Studies prescribed playlist for Unit 4. Students were asked to select from one of the five plays on the 2012 prescribed playlist. Students were expected to refer to the same play in Questions 2a., 2b. and 2c. in their responses. In 2012, the three parts of the question encompassed an analysis of how one actor conveyed a change of status in one of the characters during the performance, an analysis of how one or more actors used the acting space during the performance and an explanation of the relationship between the acting and the theatrical style used in the performance.

A high-level response was characterised by

- a high level of understanding of the play and its contexts
- a high level of understanding of the actor's use of expressive skills
- a high level of understanding of how an actor can change the status of a character
- a high level of understanding of how an actor can use the acting space
- a high level of understanding of actor–audience relationship within the play
- a high level of understanding of how a theatrical style can influence acting
- inclusion of highly pertinent examples from the play pertaining to acting
- an appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

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A mid-level response was characterised by

- a satisfactory understanding of the play and its contexts
- a satisfactory understanding of the actor's use of expressive skills
- a satisfactory understanding of how an actor can change the status of a character
- a satisfactory understanding of how an actor can use the acting space
- a satisfactory understanding of actor–audience relationship within the play
- a satisfactory understanding of how a theatrical style can influence acting
- inclusion of examples from the play pertaining to acting and stagecraft
- a satisfactory use of theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

A low-level response was characterised by

- a low level of understanding of the play and its contexts
- some understanding of an actor's use of expressive skills
- no differentiation between a character and an actor
- a low-level understanding of how an actor can change the status of a character
- a low-level understanding of how an actor can use the acting space
- a low-level understanding of actor–audience relationship within the play
- a low-level understanding of how a theatrical style can influence acting
- little or no use of theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

## 2. *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill

2a.

*The character Angie played by Eryn-Jean Noville in scene 2 expressed a very high status. This was shown through her dominance of the space as her expansive, open chested movements filled the entire space of the cubby house which was further expressive of her dominance as a high status character through the use of clear dictioned, high volumed vocalisation. Whereas is the scene in Marlene's office, Noville used meek, timid movements and a concave stance in cohesion with a low volume, underwhelming voice in moments of conversation with Marlene e.g "No thank you" in a timid manner. This represented her as considerably lower status character.*

2b.

*Anita Hegh used a strident elongated gait to physically express her dominance over the space in scene three in the "top girl's" office. She used expansive open chested movements to convey ownership and comfortability of the space, as she would centralise her character Marlene within the office on the red gash of carpet down the centre of the stage. However, in the final scene of the play in Joyce's house Marlene confined herself to a chair in the room that was left of centre showing her discomfort and lack of confidence in that particular space.*

2c.

*The opening scene of top girls utilized acting in conveying the style of 'magical realism' as the use of fluid, regal movements by Maria Theodorakis in portraying the character Pope Joan suggested a sense of 'idolism' and 'historic fare' which is unrealistic to the 80's period in which 'Top Girls' is set. Theodorakis also used her physical elements such as a haunched over stance and exhausted sullen facial expressions in the final scene of the play to reflect the style of Naturalism. As it accurately reflected the appearance of a mother exhausted by the demands of a child whilst portraying the character Joyce.*

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## Question 3

### 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	7	30	33	27	<b>2.8</b>

### 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	3	12	36	49	<b>2.3</b>

### 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	9	31	35	25	<b>1.8</b>

### 3d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	4	2	9	20	23	20	13	8	<b>4.1</b>

### 3e.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	13	25	36	26	<b>1.8</b>

In Questions 3a–e, students chose from one of the following areas of stagecraft to describe how stagecraft could be used to enhance the intended meaning of a scene: direction, stage management, dramaturgy, set design, properties, costume, make-up, sound, lighting, multimedia and promotion (including publicity). Each question asked students to consider one of the stages of production using an extract from *Chilling and Killing My Annabel Lee*. The stages of production assessed were: production planning, production development, production season and production evaluation.

Students were required to annotate the description of the setting from *Chilling and Killing My Annabel Lee* in two or more places, briefly describing how the stage directions might inform their work. They were to describe an exercise or task that was usually completed in the production development stage, to discuss how the exercise or task described could be used to interpret *Chilling and Killing My Annabel Lee* (referring to two stimulus materials provided in the insert) and explain how they could have been used to establish and maintain a mysterious mood for the audience. They were also required to discuss one or more points they might consider when evaluating the application of their stagecraft.

A high-level response was characterised by

- a very detailed description of how stagecraft could be used to enhance the intended meaning of the scene in the various stages of production
- insightful and creative annotations of the script
- description, discussion and evaluation of how the chosen area of stagecraft could enhance the intended meaning of the scene in the various stages of production
- ideas that were linked to the stagecraft in an imaginative and sophisticated manner
- inclusion of pertinent example(s) to support the discussion
- ideas being enhanced by the appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

A mid-level response was characterised by

- a clear description of how stagecraft could be used to enhance some of the intended meaning of the scene in the various stages of production
- insightful and creative annotations of the script
- description, discussion and evaluation of the chosen area of stagecraft providing some meaning to the scene in various stages of production
- ideas that were linked to the stagecraft in a satisfactory manner
- some examples to support the discussion
- limited use of appropriate theatrical language, terminology and expressions
- some understanding of the stages of production.

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A low-level response was characterised by

- limited understanding of the script excerpt
- limited understanding of how stagecraft worked within the various stages of production
- ideas that were not linked to the stagecraft
- limited or no annotations, descriptions, discussion or evaluation
- few or no examples to support the discussion
- limited or no understanding of the stages of production
- limited or no use of the appropriate theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

*Costume*

3a.

*Will have to research fabrics and materials of grey scale and sepia.*

*Consider different qualities of fabrics – determine the traits of each female character – could be smart to depict each trait in the costume.*

*Work with make-up team to perhaps research various pallets/colours collaborately.*

*Need to consider the lighting – during planning have meetings with lighting team as in the future their choices can affect the way costumes are seen visually.*

3b.

*A task that is usual for a costume team is to have technical and dress rehearsals for the performance. This includes all areas of stagecraft, however, it is highly important for costumes to be tested completely with all elements of lighting, in order to determine their full visual effect. Different lights and colours bring out varying pallets in costumes, and therefore, it is vital to determine whether or not the costumes being used are still, with the lights on, effective in portraying the various characters to the audience.*

3c.

*For this particular show, a certain luminosity is needed, and this would be achieved mainly through the lighting. I would use the task of having a technical or dress rehearsal by consulting with the lighting team while certain characters appear on stage. I believe that the detectives in the production should be in uniforms appropriate to the era, perhaps in a brown coloured pattern, and if the lights used for the production hindered this design, I would then be able to compromise with the lighting team on a more appropriate lighting state.*

3d.

*To create mood and mystery, I would perhaps use colours of greens/yellows and black/whites, as depicted in both Stimulus 1 and Stimulus 2. The gloominess and sense of the unknown is represented in these pictures provided, and it would be highly effective if Edgar wore these colours through a suit, in order to display to the audience that there is something mysterious about this character. Stimulus 3 inspires me to create a particular style of dress for the one actor portraying all the women, which is a 1940s just above the knee dress. This typical type of dress would allow the audience to identify with an ordinary 1940s women, and it would leave an imagination for the audience, as the typical dress would not pertain to one single female character, and in turn, the slow desintegrating dress, would allow the audience to feel this mood of mystery, and the suspense of whether she is real or fiction is created.*

3e.

*I would consider evaluating whether or not the costumes designed and developed assisted the performance in creating the mysterious storyline. I would evaluate whether the use of yellows, browns and greens, along with black and whites, created the luminosity of the performance or not, and whether or not the meetings with the lighting team allowed the performance to have lighting states that complemented my costumes. It would also be ideal to evaluate whether or not the basic costume of the one female actor, allowed for all female characters to be conveyed to the audience.*

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## Question 4

### 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	1	11	23	24	19	19	<b>4.0</b>

### 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	7	20	30	14	11	10	<b>3.1</b>

Question 4 required students to annotate a script excerpt from *Chilling and Killing My Annabel Lee* from the perspective of an actor. They were required to explore how an actor would use three expressive skills to convey the meaning of the script excerpt. They were then required to explain how the actor would convey the changes in status between the characters Edgar and Calminir.

A high-level response was characterised by

- an excellent understanding of how expressive skills could be used to interpret character
- a practical explanation of how expressive skills used in the interpretation of character could be used to convey the intended meaning of the script
- an understanding of the use of subtext and change of status in an excerpt of a script
- appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

A mid-level response was characterised by

- some understanding of how expressive skills could be used to interpret character
- an explanation of how expressive skills used in the interpretation of character could be used to convey the intended meaning of the script
- some understanding of the use of subtext and change of status in an excerpt of a script
- some use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

A low-level response was characterised by

- limited or no understanding of how expressive skills could be used to interpret character
- no explanation of how expressive skills used in the interpretation of character could be used to convey the intended meaning of the script
- no understanding of the use of subtext and change of status in an excerpt of a script
- basic use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

*Calminir*

*a.*

*'You' accusatory tone. Reference book 'he rolled...'*

*Innocent questioning.*

*Gesture towards Edgar with hands*

*Trying to get Edgar to confess by gaining his trust.*

*Casual tone*

*Matter of fact (stillness in movement) However hint of regret at being 'divorced'*

*'Beat' means emphasise pause and silence.*

*State very obviously 'her understanding of men' make Edgar feel inferior*

*Create imagery. Gaze out into space as if lost in thought.*

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*Struggling to form sentences. Stutters.*

*True sadness revealed. Pained facial expression*

*Low tone*

*'Yes' steady voice. Accepting. Yet still a sad expression with stillness.*

*b.*

*In order to show Calimir's higher status a police detective I would have him stand while Edgar sits as if he is in a formal interrogation at a police station. I would move very close to Edgar 'Why?' to confront him with the murder I think he has committed by making him feel uncomfortable and gaging his reaction up close, also to force him to feel guilty and compelled to tell me the truth. However, I would also compound Edgar's lower, victim status, by circling his chair and speaking behind him to make him uncomfortable and frightened. However, as Calimir shows his humanity and true feelings which have been subdued up until now, I would show a pained facial expression in the line 'were we inadequate?' as his status shifts as an equal to Edgar, left behind and abandoned by their loves.*