

Theatre Studies GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Most students who knew their material, handled Section A and Section B of the examination well, answering all questions on the paper. Where questions were divided up into either parts or had more than one focus, students either chose to divide up their answer into sections, or to answer the question in its entirety in one elongated answer. Both approaches were acceptable.

Areas of strength and weakness

Common areas of strength were:

- a sound understanding of the key knowledge across the whole study
- use of study specific terminology and concepts
- clear understanding of what was required in the answer to the questions
- sound understanding of stagecraft and its application
- clear distinctions between the concepts such as 'identify', 'discuss' and 'analyse'.

Common areas of weaknesses were:

- limited understanding of some of the key concepts and/or terminology in the study, such as the difference, and the interrelationship between, performance styles and theatrical conventions
- the number of marks allocated to a question not being used as a guide to the depth of the response
- limited or no use of appropriate terminology pertaining to the area/s of stagecraft being discussed or analysed.

Some common faults were:

- students writing about their Monologue performance in Question 4 rather than a prescribed scene they had interpreted
- responses being descriptions rather than discussion or analysis as required by the question, or not being directly relevant to the question
- the provision of an illustration in an answer where this was not an option
- students not making it clear which of the plays they were writing about or which topics within a question they were addressing.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A

Question 1 (Average mark 5.81/Available marks 9)

This question required students to apply skills related to the use of stagecraft in theatre. Students were asked to discuss the use of (or implied use of) **one** area of stagecraft in the illustration provided.

More successful responses were often characterised by:

- an informed discussion of one area of stagecraft that had been applied and/or could be applied on the stage in the illustration
- evidence of a clear and comprehensive understanding of the nature and purpose of the selected area of stagecraft
- well chosen examples selected from the illustration
- use of appropriate terminology in the discussion of the area of stagecraft.

Less successful responses were often characterised by a discussion that indicated a limited knowledge of the stagecraft area, a description of the illustration rather than a discussion of the ways in which stagecraft has been applied and/or could be applied, a limited use of terminology related to the chosen area of stagecraft, and few or tenuous links to the stage illustration.

Question 2 (9.0/15)

This question pertained to the students' application of one area of stagecraft and working within a collaborative process in Unit 3 on the production of a play/s or excerpt/s from play/s.

It should be noted that the question indicated that the student was to:

- discuss **one** area of stagecraft (i.e. not two or more)
- discuss the application of stagecraft in the **rehearsal/s** (i.e. not in any of the other stages of the production, for example the performance season)
- base the answer on a stagecraft area **he/she** had developed.

More successful responses were often characterised by:

- a well developed discussion of how the collaborative production process aided the student to develop one area of stagecraft
- a well developed discussion of how the student interpreted the play/s or excerpt/s from the play/s by developing one area of stagecraft
- well chosen use of theatrical terminology used in the discussion
- well-selected examples from the rehearsal/s of the production.

Some responses were often characterised by a limited discussion, if any, of the collaborative production process, a discussion that indicated a limited understanding of the stagecraft area, a general discussion about the application of an area of stagecraft without the student discussing what they had personally contributed to the production and reference to the production in general, rather than the specified rehearsal process.

Question 3 a. (3.71/4) b. (2.65/4)

This question required students to read the excerpt from *Death of a Salesman* and then, in part a) to identify two distinguishing characteristics of one of the characters in the scene, and in part b) to, discuss how an actor might use the two characteristics to interpret the character. This question was generally handled well by most students.

Responses that scored well on this question were often characterised by:

- examples that indicated a high level of understanding of the characters
- a discussion that demonstrated a sound understanding of the acting process, including the development of character
- a discussion that showed a high level of understanding of the dynamics of the scene and the interrelationships of the characters.

Responses that received a low score on this question were often characterised by identifying and discussing one, rather than two characteristics, or a response to part b) that was tenuously and/or not linked to the two characteristics that had been identified in part a).

Question 4 (4.55/8)

This question required students to discuss the application of performance style/s and/or theatrical conventions in an interpretation of the prescribed scene in Unit 4.

It should be noted that the question indicated that the student was to discuss **an** interpretation of the prescribed scene (i.e. it was not necessary to discuss more than one interpretation), or discuss the **prescribed scene** (i.e. the prescribed scene from one of the plays listed on the Theatre Studies monologue list for Unit 4), or discuss the interpretation of the scene in relation to the performance style/s **and/or** theatrical conventions.

Responses that scored well on this question were often characterised by:

- a clear and evident understanding of the nature of performance style/s and/or theatrical conventions
- well supported, pertinent examples that were well linked to the application of the performance style/s and/or theatrical conventions in the interpretation of the scene
- a high level of understanding of the scene and its context within the play from which it is derived
- reference made to the various characters in the scene (not just the one in the monologue).

Responses that received a low score on this question were often characterised by:

- a limited understanding of performance styles and/or theatrical conventions
- the inclusion of information about the interpretation of the scene that was not relevant to the discussion of the application of performance styles and/or theatrical conventions
- a discussion that was limited to the monologue contained within the scene, rather than the scene as a whole
- writing generally about the play and not the specified scene from it
- little understanding of the scene, the characters within it and the play from which it was derived.

Section B

Question 5 (6.52/12)

This question required students to make reference to the performance of **one** of the prescribed plays on the Theatre Studies Play list for Unit 3. The choice of plays was listed on the examination paper. Students had to discuss the interrelationship between the historical, political and/or social background of the play and the play as it was performed on stage. It should be noted that most students wrote on two or more aspects of the background of the play.

More successful responses were often characterised by:

- being centred on the relationship between the performed play and its historical, political and/or social background

- well chosen examples from both the play in performance and relevant aspects of its background
- a clear understanding of the difference between, and the interrelationship of, the historical, social and/or political aspects of the play
- a high level of understanding of both the play in performance and the relevant details of its background.

Responses that received a low score on this question were often characterised by a limited discussion, or no specific reference to the historical, political and/or social background play, or discussion of the events in the play, but with little reference to them as seen by the student in the plot of the play as realised on stage, or little understanding of both the play in performance and the relevant details of its background.

Question 6 (5.21/8)

This question required students to make reference to the performance of **one** of the prescribed plays on the Theatre Studies Play list for Unit 4. The choice of plays was listed on the examination paper. Students had to select one of the actors in the play and analyse how she/he portrayed her/his character/s. Where an actor played more than one character, the student had the option to discuss one or more of them.

Students were required to refer to any **two** of:

- actor–audience relationship
- use of acting space
- use of gesture.

If a student analysed only one of the required two aspects of the performance, the highest mark they could attain for this question was 4 marks.

More successful responses were often characterised by:

- a high level of understanding of the nature and use of two selected aspects of the actor’s performance (i.e. any two of: use of gesture, use of the acting space or actor–audience relationship)
- a high level of analysis of the actor in the production in relation to the above
- well selected examples from the play in performance
- understanding of the interrelationship between the actor’s portrayal of character and the performance style/s of the play.

Responses that received a low score on this question were often characterised by:

- limited understanding of the nature and use of two elements of the actor’s performance (i.e. any two of: use of gesture, use of the acting space or actor–audience relationship) and/or only one element discussed in a limited way
- a limited level of analysis of the actor in the production in relation to the above, or a description of the actor’s portrayal, rather than analysis of it
- misunderstanding of the difference between the actor/s and the character/s, or little understanding of the play and/or production.