



2009

Theatre Studies GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2009 written examination for Theatre Studies was based on the reaccredited *VCE Theatre Studies Study Design* (2007–2011). 2009 was the first year that the exam was in the form of a question and answer book and the exam was consistent with the format published in the *VCAA Bulletin VCE, VCAL and VET*. All Unit 3 and 4 Outcomes were assessed, except for Unit 4, Area of Study 1, which is assessed in the monologue performance examination. A total of 50 marks was available for the paper.

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. It would appear that many students chose to answer the questions in a different order to the sequence on the examination, often starting with Question 4, which was worth the most marks. This was deemed to be a judicious decision. Some students, however, were not guided by the number of marks per question in regard to the length and depth of their response and gave lengthy answers to questions only worth 2, 3 or 4 marks. These students consequently ran out of time when answering questions worth more marks.

Students were given the option to support any of their written answers with hand-drawn illustrations and/or diagrams, and some took advantage of this option. Some questions required students to provide illustrations and most students seemed to have no problem doing so. Some questions required students to annotate their hand-drawn illustrations, and this requirement was generally complied with.

Areas of strength and weakness

High-scoring papers demonstrated:

- sophisticated understanding and use of subject-specific language, terminology and expressions
- a high level of skill in explaining, analysing and evaluating
- a sound working knowledge of how one or more of the following areas of stagecraft can be applied through the stages of production (production planning, production development, production season, production evaluation): acting, direction, dramaturgy, stage management, set, costume, lighting, properties, make-up, sound, multimedia and promotion (including publicity)
- a high level of skill in developing images and/or ideas from playscripts using acting and/or other areas of stagecraft
- a sound knowledge of the ways in which theatrical style(s) can inform the intended meaning of a playscript
- sophisticated use of specific examples
- evidence of having studied the plays from the Unit 3 prescribed playlist
- 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 course to 'stimulus material' in the examination (*VCE Theatre Studies Study Design*, page 31).

Lower scoring papers demonstrated:

- incorrect and/or 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 course
- limited evidence of having studied 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
- limited use of the marks allocated for each question as a guide to the depth of response required
- little or no understanding of how to annotate diagrams/illustrations
- answers which were incomplete or lacked detail
- responses that were repetitive or off task.

Advice for students

- Questions may be answered in any order.
- Students should attempt to answer all questions.



- Students should be guided by the number of marks allocated to each question when determining the length of their response. This is particularly important if the question implies that a short answer is required; students should consider what is deemed an appropriate length of response for short answer questions. Note that, as in 2009, the 2010 examination will be presented in a question and answer book. Students should use the question requirements, the number of marks allocated and the number of lines provided for the response as guides to the amount of detail required for each response.
- Students should 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 the difference between an analysis and an evaluation; when writing an evaluation some evaluative comments are required in addition to the analytical ones.
- Students need to understand requirements for annotating diagrams/illustrations. When required to annotate diagrams/illustrations some students only labelled them. Annotations should add explanatory comments to the diagrams/illustrations.
- Students should develop a working vocabulary based on theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

The 2009 examination paper did not stipulate that a particular form of written response was required. 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. Where an explanation, analysis or evaluation is required, it is appropriate that students write their answer in a format other than dot points. The examination contained a detachable insert that contained 'stimulus materials' pertaining to Question 4. When responding to this question students were required to draw on the stimulus materials and the 'contextual background' information that was also provided.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

For Question 1 an excerpt from a playscript was reproduced with accompanying questions. It was clearly noted on the examination paper that no prior knowledge of the plays, their contextual background or the stimulus material was required when answering Questions 1 and 4.

Question 1

Students were asked to draw on key knowledge and key skills pertaining to Unit 4, Area of Study 2 and interpret a scene by applying stagecraft. The contextual background for this question provided the historical background to the play (*Fix it Alice* by Ernie Gray), a synopsis, the setting, themes, characters, staging and an excerpt of the playscript. Two questions were asked in relation to the context. Students were informed that they could apply any theatrical style(s) to their interpretation of the scene and that they could change the original context to another appropriate context.

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	2	8	19	30	24	15	4.1

Students were asked to explain how two ways of acting could be used to emphasise one or more themes of the play.

A high-level response was characterised by:

- an excellent understanding of how acting could be used to emphasise the themes of a play
- a practical explanation of how acting could be used to emphasise the themes of a play
- inclusion of pertinent example(s) from the script such as dialogue and/or stage directions from the scene, and/or other aspects of the contextual background such as the synopsis, the style of the play, the setting of the play, the themes, the characters or the specified staging requirements
- appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

Following is an example of a high-level response.

Presentation of stereotypical genders: one major theme of 'Fix it Alice' is the role of gender in the workplace. Exaggerated portrayal of stereotyped characters, such as Con and Pappo having loud, intruding voices with broad accents and a slow pace would enhance their domineering presence, in this male-dominated world. Their exaggerated physicality, heavy swagger, backward 'laid back' stance, 'leading' from the groin and rough playful gestures would overwhelm Alice and enhance their bravado. Contrast in Alice: another theme is the struggle for group acceptance. The actor playing Alice would present a more

2009 Assessment Report



perky, younger girl, 'full of life' with an upright stance trying to prove she can fit in, but her unsure voice, 'Sir...' would expose her insecurity. The older more reflective Alice would use a stronger voice and more fluid physicality to show her acceptance has grown with age.

A satisfactory (or mid-level) response was characterised by:

- a satisfactory understanding of how acting could be used to emphasise the themes of a play
- some explanation of how acting can be used to emphasise the themes of a play
- inclusion of pertinent example(s) from the script such as dialogue and/or stage directions from the scene, and/or other aspects of the contextual background such as the synopsis, the style of the play, the setting of the play, the themes, the characters or the specified staging requirements
- some use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

A low-level response was characterised by:

- little or no understanding of how acting could be used to emphasise the themes of a play
- little or no explanation of how acting can be used to emphasise the themes of a play
- little or no example(s) from the script and/or other aspects of the contextual background
- little, incorrect or no use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	1	0	2	10	23	24	20	12	7	5.1

Students were asked to discuss how two areas of stagecraft could be used to enhance the intended meaning of the scene. The two areas of stagecraft were to be selected from the list provided.

A high-level response was characterised by:

- an insightful and creative discussion of how two areas of stagecraft from the areas of costume, direction, make-up, sound or multimedia could be used to enhance the meaning of the scene
- an imaginative and sophisticated link(s) made between the intended meaning of the scene and two areas of stagecraft
- inclusion of pertinent example(s) to support the discussion
- appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

Following is an example of a high-level response.

Sound: the reflective statements by older versions of characters are direct addresses to the audience portraying different points of view to those explicit in the scene. Having them pre-recorded and played from speakers behind the audience would make them echo in the school gymnasium, lending them power, and the audience would feel involved in the story. A soundscape of the bustling garage could be played loudly before the scene to establish context and mood. The vocal delivery of the actors would be quick-paced and energetic as the dialogue is naturalistic, this would represent the garage's busy life. Characterised vocalisation would help develop the plot – Joe having a cruel drawling voice, Alice being chirpy, Con and Pappo laughing and sneering while speaking. Direction: the physical fights in the scene would need to be timed precisely to enhance comic effect, blocking would also be important. Alice needs to be overwhelmed by a mass of bodies, but also be downstage to communicate directly to the audience. Director's notes in the program would specify the themes of gender to inform and educate the audience prior to viewing.

A satisfactory (or mid-level) response was characterised by:

- a satisfactory discussion of how two areas of stagecraft from the areas of costume, direction, make-up, sound or multimedia could be used to enhance the meaning of the scene
- clearly described link(s) between the scene and two areas of stagecraft to provide meaning
- examples used to support the discussion
- some use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

A low-level response was characterised by:

- a very limited discussion of how two areas of stagecraft from the areas of costume, direction, makeup, sound or multimedia could be used to enhance the meaning of the scene
- few or oblique links between the scene and two of the stated areas of stagecraft
- little or no use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.



Question 2

Play chosen	None	<i>Travelling North</i>	<i>A Stretch of the Imagination</i>	<i>Realism</i>	<i>Optimism</i>
%	1	5	8	48	39

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	4	1	3	8	14	18	20	16	9	7	5.5

Students were asked to select one of the listed questions, each of which pertained specifically to one of the plays on the 2009 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 2009 Unit 3 prescribed playlist and have studied the corresponding written playscript. Students were expected to refer to both the play in performance and the written playscript in their response.

A high-level response was characterised by:

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

Following is an example of a high-level response.

'Realism' by Paul Galloway

The three theatrical styles implied in the written playscript were effectively utilised in the play in performance working to educate and entertain the audience and enhancing the lively atmosphere of the play.

1. Naturalism: The Naturalistic theatrical style was implied in much of the written playscript and effectively conveyed in the performance through the actor's expressive skills and body language in Act One. Grant Piro's characterisation of Dinky effectively conveyed his friendly, loveable nature through his open gestures, wide-eyed smile and the warm tone in his voice, creating a realistic interpretation of character. The elements of naturalism implied in the written playscript were further enhanced by their strong contrast with the two other theatrical styles present: Social Realism and Meyerholdism.

2. Dinky's performance of the etude in Act One introduced the theatrical style of Meyerholdism (Biomechanics) to the performance. This was suggested in the written playscript. Also, the written playscript's reference to 'the cup of significance' was effectively performed in the fluid stylistic manner characteristic of Biomechanics, implied in the written playscript. The non-naturalistic sequence in Act Two effectively conveyed the constructionist nature of Biomechanics in the utilisation of the physical, stylised movement.

3. The theatrical style Social Realism was apparent in the character's rehearsal for Stalin's 60th Birthday. Implied in the written playscript, the actor's much more rigid manner of acting in the rehearsals gave the impression of forced movement to the audience allowing them to effectively differentiate between the misleading, enforced nature of the Social Realist theatrical style and the more natural, authentic nature of the Naturalistic theatrical style.

A satisfactory (or mid-level) response was characterised by:

- an understanding of the play in production and the written playscript from which it was derived
- inclusion of appropriate examples from the written playscript and/or play in performance
- the use of theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

A low-level response was characterised by:

- 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 in a play in production
- limited use of examples from the written playscript and/or reference to only the play in performance
- little or no use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

Question 3

Play chosen	None	<i>Embers</i>	<i>Happy Days</i>	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
%	0	21	43	36

2009 Assessment Report



Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	3	16	42	40	2.2

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	16	43	38	2.2

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	20	44	33	2.1

Students were asked to answer each of the three parts to the question, making reference to one of the plays from the 2009 prescribed playlist for Unit 4. In answering the questions, students needed to describe how one actor used verbal and nonverbal language to convey the intended meaning of the play, analyse the changing status of one character through the production and analyse how one actor's use of space enhanced the intended meaning of the play.

A high-level response was characterised by:

- a high level of understanding of the play and its contexts
- an understanding of the differentiation between a character and an actor
- inclusion of highly pertinent examples from the play pertaining to acting and/or the characters
- use of appropriate theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

Following is an example of a high-level response.

The Taming of the Shrew by William Shakespeare

3a. Jeanette Cronin's triumphant, manipulative and zealous Petrucio was shown by her cat-like skips and athletic leaps which gave her energy and stage presence, and her exaggerated facial expressions and masculine stance to show a strong character. This complimented the lengthy, witty insults within the playscript. She spoke with varying pace, intonation and comic timing. Together, her verbal and non-verbal communication helped explain the complex story in a lively manner, and convey the intended theme of gender roles.

3b. Emily Rose Brennan's 'Bianca' was portrayed as high-status before she appeared on stage, her suitors endowed her with being 'fair' and 'gentle' Her high pitched breathy, sing-song voice and smooth movements further highlighted that she felt sure of herself in Padua's society, her social status was elevated. In contrast, the last moments of the play show Bianca, her voice with a whining quality, her body slumped, facing upstage, dissatisfied with how her status has fallen due to the rising status of her sister. Bianca's change in status was comic and helped the audience relate to the position of women in society.

3c. Lucentio played by Louisa Hasting Edge was integral in establishing the setting and mood of the play – an ambiguous and seedy 'European Men's Club', which highlighted the theme of gender conflict. She swaggered around the stage, standing on tables, leaning on chairs to portray this mood. Contrastingly, her whispered conversation with the actor who played Tranio in downstage corners highlighted the idea that each of the characters had secrets and nothing was as it seemed.

A satisfactory (or mid-level) response was characterised by:

- a satisfactory level of understanding of the play and its contexts
- some differentiation between a character and an actor
- inclusion of appropriate examples from the play pertaining to acting and/or the characters
- 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
- no differentiation between a character and an actor
- inclusion of scant examples from the play pertaining to acting and/or the characters
- little or no use of theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	13	31	25	25	2.5



Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	1	3	14	26	24	19	13	3.8

Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	2	1	4	12	18	18	20	13	13	5.1

Question 4 was based on Unit 3, Outcomes 1 and 2 and required students to draw on their knowledge and skills of how to apply stagecraft to interpret a playscript and analyse the application of stagecraft. Students were required to draw on two or more of the stimulus materials and the contextual background provided when responding to the question. The selected playscript was *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare. Students were not required to have prior knowledge of the playscript, its contextual background or the stimulus, and they were able to change the original time and setting of the play to another appropriate context.

Students were required to select one of the listed areas of stagecraft to complete part a. of the question, and a second of the listed areas of stagecraft for Question 4b. The same stagecraft area used in 4b. then needed to be used to respond to 4c. At least one accompanying illustration or design was required for responses to 4c.

A high-level response was characterised by:

- a high level of understanding and application of the chosen area of stagecraft
- a highly insightful understanding of the theatrical possibilities of the chosen area of stagecraft in relation to the question and how it could be applied
- a sound understanding of the stages of production
- a relevant and perceptive demonstration of the relationship and influences between the context of the play and the stimulus material, and the way in which this informed the selected area of stagecraft
- highly pertinent examples, including annotated illustrations or designs
- appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

Following are examples of high-level responses.

Question 4a.

Properties

Production planning

Large quantity of props in Elizabethan Theatre' therefore I need to go through the entire play script and find all the references to props and the potential for props. I will then have to source these and collaborate with the director and the design team so that they are visually right and also workable for the production and ready to be rehearsed with in the production development stage.

Production evaluation

Bump-out occurs. I will need to source all the props that have been used in the production, clean, repair and return these if needed or store them safely away with the stage manager. It would also be useful to asses how well the props worked in performance so that I know what aspects worked well and what I should change for next time in order to improve the standard of performance.

Question 4b.

Sound

In this stage it is important to be present in rehearsals to get a feel for the timing and movement of the performance and communicate with the director so as to incorporate SFX effectively into the production so it works to enhance aspects of the performance. One of the conventions of Elizabethan Theatre is having live music, thus musicians will be present onstage and perform live – they will have to come to rehearsals to practice with the actors thus I will have to collaborate with the director and the stage manager so that this will be able to happen. Another aspect of Elizabethan Theatre is the use of lyrical and symbolic dialogue therefore in order to enhance this aspect I will work with a flute player in the production development stage so that in certain lyrical moments in the written playscript the flute player will play live on stage as the actor speaks, enhancing the musicality of the words – this will need to be rehearsed thoroughly so the timing is perfect.

Question 4c.

Sound

Stimulus 7: Tabor and pipes are indicated in the written playscript therefore musicians will be playing drums and wind instruments such as flutes and string instruments such as guitar in order to effectively convey the island feel of the play, to stay true to the written playscript and to enhance the musical features of the play .The idea of the supernatural, magic nature (suggested in the contextual background) will also be reinforced by the use of these instruments. The flute will play soft, sweet,



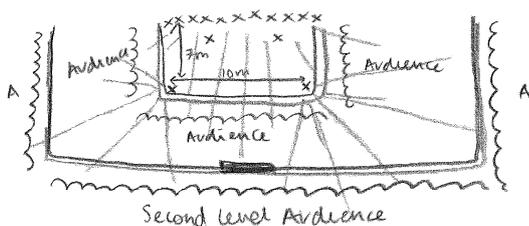
melodic tunes and the drums will play a steady beat giving the play a magical sense and somewhat tribal island atmosphere reinforced by the steady beat of the drums.

Stimulus 1: The isolated island, surrounded by water, atmosphere will also be conveyed through sound. I will use the soft sound of the gentle waves and water lapping the sand as a SFX that will be played very softly throughout the entire play so the audience really feel like they have been transported far, far away to this magical island that is suggested by the play's traditional setting. Also as Elizabethan Theatre traditionally uses minimal sets the music will be a strong indicator of the play's setting. The contextual background also mentions the idea of revenge so in the moment where Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo are planning to kill Prospero and make Stephano king, the beat of the drums will be faster and louder so as to suggest that the action of the play is rising and increase the play's dramatic tension and raise the suspense in the audience. As previously mentioned, the magical flutes, guitars and drumming rhythm will be utilized very strongly in the moment in the play where Ariel conjures up a tempest and Prospero brings those shipwrecked to the island. This will work to convey the idea of the characters entering a magical, mystical strange world and help the audience to identify with the character's feelings of wonderment as they too enter the magical world of the island. As the stage is surrounded by the audience on three sides and there are two levels, the musicians onstage will be positioned around the sides of the stage so that the music goes out to all directions and surrounds the audience (see image). In highly musical moments the musicians will step forward DSC, DSL and DSR but otherwise will be behind the actors so as not to obstruct the audience's view. Additional speakers will be placed around the theatre, playing the soft calming sound of the sea quietly as background music throughout the performance. Stimulus 7 also conveys a very lyrical, melodious moment of the performance and references to 'sweet airs that give delight and hurt not' and 'sleep' are important aspects of the play that should be reflected in choices of sounds to convey the rich musicality of Shakespeare's play.

SOUND PLAN

x = musicians

/// = sound emanating throughout theatre



/// = Soundbox controlling SFX

/// = speakers controlled in the soundbox

(Please note that the student used coloured pencils for the image above to further differentiate the various elements of the diagram.)

A satisfactory (or mid-level) response was characterised by:

- a satisfactory level of understanding and application of the chosen area of stagecraft
- an appropriate level of understanding of the theatrical possibilities of the chosen area of stagecraft in relation to the question and how it could be applied in the context provided
- some understanding of the stages of production
- a demonstration of the relationship and influences between the contextual background of the play and the stimulus material, and the way in which this informed the selected area of stagecraft
- examples, diagrams and illustrations with some labelling
- use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

A low-level response was characterised by:

- a very limited understanding and application of the chosen area of stagecraft
- little or no understanding of the theatrical possibilities of the chosen area of stagecraft
- little or no relationship between the play and/or stimulus material and/or context, generally with a superficial response
- little or no understanding of the stages of production
- limited or no examples, diagrams and illustrations
- little or no annotations
- little or no use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.