



GCSE

Drama

8261/X Texts in practice

Report on the examination

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Introduction

Component 3 is an externally assessed component. A visiting examiner will mark the work for all students.

The Assessment Objective being assessed is AO2: Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance.

The 2025 visiting window ran from mid-January to the end of May.

Students are required to prepare two extracts from the same play. While centres have the freedom to choose the text, it must align with the specifications outlined in the guidance. Performance students should only play one role per extract, unless it's part of the playwright's intention (e.g., multi-roling in *Teechers*). Design students need to submit two separate designs, one for each extract.

Students may choose to perform monologues, duologues, or group pieces, but centres are reminded to review the specification for requirements like group size and minimum timings, which apply to each extract.

Each extract should begin with the identification of all performance and design students, and this should be included in the recording made during the visit. Both extracts are assessed independently and must have a distinct beginning and end.

Examiners reported a diverse range of work this series, spanning from fully realized performances to less successful attempts.

Overall, centres demonstrated a strong understanding of the component requirements.

Centres are kindly reminded that recordings of the exam work should be submitted to the examiner within 10 working days of the visit.

If a centre has any doubts about the administrative procedures, it is recommended they contact their NEA adviser well in advance of the scheduled visit.

Administration: Paperwork and Submission of Work

In this series, most centres were well-prepared and provided approved Play Approval Forms well in advance, allowing examiners ample time to prepare.

Copies of extracts can be shared hard copy or electronically, a full text should only be sent if specifically requested by the examiner, typically when the chosen play is less well-known and the examiner may be unfamiliar with it.

It was helpful to the examination process when centres provided clear programme notes, making it easier for examiners to identify students. Programme notes should ideally include details such as the play title, the specific extract for each student, and the student's full name and candidate number.

For centres that mailed their work, examiners appreciated when all required paperwork was sent in an organised and clear manner, which greatly supported the examination process.

Statements of Dramatic Intention

The statement of dramatic intention serves to give students an opportunity to express their creative vision, while also allowing examiners to view the performance within the intended context.

Students are expected to have studied their chosen play in its entirety and selected suitable extracts for performance. In this assessment series, examiners observed a wide range of statements, from minimal responses to detailed and highly relevant dramatic intentions.

The most effective statements demonstrated a deep understanding of the text and clearly articulated how the students' intentions would be realised in performance. These included specific references to the use of physical or vocal skills, or for design students' elements such as colour, to convey meaning and support their interpretation.

Strong and insightful intentions reflected a practical engagement with the play and a solid awareness of its broader context.

In contrast, weaker statements tended to be too brief or vague, offering little insight into the purpose or background of the performance.

Dramatic intentions should be achievable for the student and remain consistent with the original text.

Recording Performances

When recording the performance, the camera must remain in a fixed position and capture the work from the perspective of a live audience. Centres should ensure that the distance between the performance area and the microphone is appropriate to achieve clear audio quality.

Centres are reminded that, prior to the commencement of the performance, each student is required to identify themselves on camera by stating their full name, candidate number, chosen specialism, the title of the play, and the role they will be performing.

For design students, centres must ensure that a close-up view of the design work is included in the recording to provide sufficient detail for assessment.

Finally, centres are reminded that all USBs used for submission must be password protected. The password should be the one designated by AQA.

Choice of Extracts

The choice between group performance, duologue, or monologue did not directly affect the success of a student's response. Examiners confirmed that all performance formats could access the full range of marks available.

Approaches varied across centres: in some, all students performed monologues; in others, students were assigned to duologues or group performances. Several centres employed a combination of all three formats.

Most performances this series met the required timing criteria. However, a small number fell below the minimum time requirement. In some instances, extracts exceeded the maximum duration, which occasionally proved self-limiting, as some students were unable to maintain focus or sustain their character throughout the extended performance.

Examiners noted that some centres selected the same extract or play text for all students. While this was sometimes advantageous, particularly when the text had been sufficiently explored and offered students a strong understanding of the performance features, it was also observed that certain texts were more accessible to some students than others, potentially disadvantaging some students.

Centres are advised to consult the relevant sections of the specification if there is any uncertainty regarding group size or time requirements. In general, the extracts selected provided students with the opportunity to demonstrate meaningful contributions within the performance.

Finally, centres are reminded that the use of non-assessed students is strictly prohibited unless prior approval has been granted by AQA.

Choice of Text

The selection of both the play text and the chosen extract played a significant role in determining student achievement. Examiners consistently reported that the overall standard of performance or design work was closely linked to the appropriateness and suitability of the selected material.

In stronger responses, students demonstrated a secure knowledge and understanding of the text, which was evident in both their practical work and design realisations. Conversely, where students had only a limited grasp of the play's broader context, they were less able to effectively communicate key themes, ideas, or stylistic elements in their work.

A wide range of texts was observed across centres, with some proving particularly popular and others being less familiar. However, the popularity of a text had no bearing on student

success. Instead, it was the depth of understanding and interpretation demonstrated by the student that most clearly contributed to higher achievement.

A clear appreciation of the text's stylistic qualities and the playwright's creative intentions was a consistent feature of more accomplished work. The selection of an appropriate role(s) is also a key consideration. Students must fully understand the character they are portraying and be able to apply a range of performance skills to communicate their interpretation convincingly.

Where students appeared unfamiliar with key contextual references within the text, it was noted that some attempted to alter these to improve clarity. Centres are reminded that such changes should not be made as a substitute for understanding. A thorough awareness of the play's context and original references is essential.

Centres are also reminded that performances should remain faithful to the playwright's original intentions.

Examiners reported successful work across all formats, including monologues, duologues, and group performances.

The most frequently performed texts during this series included:

- *DNA* by Dennis Kelly
- *Things I Know To Be True* by Andrew Bovell
- *Teechers* by John Godber
- *Find Me* by Olwen Wymark
- *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Simon Stephens
- *Bouncers* by John Godber
- *Shakers* by John Godber and Jane Thornton
- *The Woman in Black* by Stephen Mallatratt
- *Blackout* by Davey Anderson
- *Girls Like That* by Evan Placey

Facilitating the Exam

Visiting examiners noted that, in the majority of cases, the examination was well organised, effectively supporting students and meeting the assessment requirements.

In most centres, an appropriate and encouraging audience was present. Examiners observed that a supportive audience contributed positively to the atmosphere, enhancing the sense of occasion and providing students with the engagement their performances merited.

In a small number of instances, students requested to perform without an audience due to anxiety about presenting in front of others.

Where a sense of occasion was lacking, examiners reported that performances were sometimes delivered in non-specialist spaces or without adequate preparation time, which in turn impacted the overall quality of the work.

Centres are sincerely thanked for their continued commitment and effort in preparing for and facilitating the examination effectively.

Performance Skill - Performer

In this examination series, the majority of students chose to respond in the role of performer. Examiners observed a broad spectrum of work, ranging from fully realised and engaging performances to those that were limited in scope and amounted to little more than a reading of the script.

Stronger performances were characterised by a clear understanding of the text, with students demonstrating confidence and fluency in delivering their lines. These performances were well rehearsed, effectively communicated dramatic intentions, and reflected a thoughtful engagement with the material.

Examiners reported a wide range in the application of physical, vocal, and interpretative skills, from basic to highly accomplished. In most instances, students appeared sufficiently prepared, and the work had been adequately rehearsed. In the most successful cases, performances had been thoroughly refined and fully developed. For example, students demonstrated a strong grasp of the given circumstances and applied appropriate performance skills to interpret and present their characters in a manner consistent with the demands of the extract and the broader context of the play.

In these stronger responses, performers made deliberate use of the performance space and, where applicable, interacted meaningfully with fellow performers in ways that aligned with the playwright's original intentions.

In less successful responses, students appeared less comfortable in the performance space, and in some instances, hesitation in delivery was evident due to uncertainty with lines or blocking. In certain cases, performances lacked depth, with lines being recited from memory without genuine interpretation of character or meaningful communication of the text's creative intentions. Some students required prompting during their performance, and others relied on using their script. Where this occurred, it often proved self-limiting, restricting the development and effectiveness of the performance.

Performance Skill – Costume Design

Examiners observed a range of costume design responses during this series, varying from very basic concepts to more effective and fully realised designs. The strongest work demonstrated an understanding of the wider context of the play, taking into account elements such as period, style, and setting. These more successful designs enhanced the communication of the given circumstances and supported character development.

Well-executed designs also conveyed relevant information about the character's situation within the extract and contributed meaningfully to the storytelling. Fully developed costume designs showed consideration of how the actor would move in or interact with the costume, aligning with the dramatic intentions of the piece.

In contrast, less successful designs tended to be limited in scope and often appeared to rely on readily available items, with little evidence of thoughtful selection or exploration of alternatives. In some cases, the costume choices were inappropriate for the character or context of the play, resulting in a minimal contribution to the overall performance.

Performance Skill – Lighting Design

Examiners reported a range of lighting design responses during this series. Where lighting design was selected as a specialism, it was typically by students with a genuine interest in and prior experience of working with stage lighting.

In the stronger responses, students demonstrated an understanding of how lighting could be used to support and enhance the realisation of creative intentions, in a way that was appropriate to both the extract and the wider play.

Effective designs showed an awareness of the key elements available to a lighting designer, including colour, direction, movement, and intensity. These responses illustrated how lighting could interact with the text, using different lighting states to reflect shifts in action, mood, and atmosphere within the performance.

Less successful responses were limited in scope, often featuring only basic lighting concepts, such as simple transitions or blackouts between scenes, with little evidence of purposeful design choices.

It is recognised that a centre's ability to support students in this area may be influenced by the availability of appropriate technical resources.

Performance Skill – Sound Design

As in previous series, only a small number of students chose sound design as their specialism. More successful responses demonstrated well-developed and refined ideas, often created through effective collaboration with students in other design or performance roles. These designs were thoughtfully integrated and contributed meaningfully to the realisation of the extract's creative intentions.

In contrast, less successful responses tended to be limited in scope. Examiners noted that some designs involved little more than playing a piece of music or a sound effect in one or two sections of the performance. In such cases, the use of sound often felt superficial and lacked clear purpose.

It was evident that the choice of extract played an important role in enabling students to demonstrate their sound design skills. Extracts that offered sufficient opportunities for creative sound design allowed students to access the full range of available marks.

Performance Skill – Set Design

Set design responses in this series ranged from basic and rudimentary to more effective and theatrically appropriate concepts.

The most successful designs were well suited to the text being performed and often came from students with a genuine interest in production arts. These responses demonstrated a clear level of skill, thoughtful planning, and creative intention. Stronger submissions included two distinct set designs—one for each extract—both of which were carefully considered and aligned with the demands and context of the performance material.

In contrast, less successful responses tended to be simplistic, often limited to rearranging standard classroom furniture such as chairs and tables. These designs lacked depth and creative intention, with minimal evidence of purposeful design choices. In many cases, the changes between extracts were superficial and failed to demonstrate a meaningful understanding of set design principles.

Performance Skill – Puppet Design

Most examiners reported that puppet design was not seen during this series, with only a very small number of students choosing to respond through this design specialism.

In instances where puppet design was presented, it was clear that students had a genuine interest in puppetry and a sound understanding of its potential in performance.

In the most successful responses, the puppet design was entirely appropriate for the extract and aligned well with the wider context and creative intentions of the play.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.