



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCE Drama & Theatre (9DR0)

9DR0 / 02: Text in Performance

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9 DR0/02 Text in Performance

Non Examined Assessment (NEA)

Introduction

This component is externally assessed.

In this component students are asked to develop and demonstrate theatre-making skills, working from two key extracts. They will explore how they realise artistic intentions in performance. Students can enter as either a **Performer or a Designer** or as a combination of these roles. There are two areas of focus.

1) A monologue or a duologue performance/design realisation from one key extract from one performance text

2) A group performance/design realisation of one key extract from a different performance text.

Students may complete this component either as a performer or as a designer or combine these roles across extracts presented for assessment.

The design roles are:

- costume design
- lighting design
- set design
- sound design.

Centres wanting to offer design roles to students should refer to the A Level specification *Appendix 3: Design roles minimum resource guidance for centres* for further guidance on the requirements for design candidates.

Centres are asked to include a Statement of Intention (Sol) for the monologue/duologue and the group performance for each candidate. Centres are advised to check that they are using the most current and up-to-date form on the Pearson website as administrative details have changed already during the life of this specification. This is not an assessed part of the NEA. The Sol provides a dialogue between the candidate and the examiner of their intentions behind the portrayal, chosen style/genre and decisions made regarding the design or performance that may be pertinent to assessment.

Whilst this carries no discrete marks of its own, examiners continue to report that the Sol offered insight into the chosen portrayal or design in context, supporting the examiner in placing the work in the correct level. Guidelines are set out on page 40 of the A Level specification.

Monologue or Duologue Performance/Design Realisation:

Students must work alone or in a pair on either a monologue or a duologue. Time limits for each are clearly detailed on page 35 of the specification. Performers are assessed out of 24 on Vocal and Physical Techniques, Characterisation, Communication, Interpretation and Artistic Intention. **(AO2)**

Designers are also assessed out of 24, on Design Skills, Application of Materials, Creative Choices, Understanding of Design Function and Purpose and Creative Intent. **(AO2)**

The Designer has a choice of either Set, Costume, Lighting or Sound for both the Group Performance and the Monologue or Duologue.

Group Performance/Design Realisation:

Students must work in groups of 3-6 performance candidates. Each group may have an additional design candidates with a maximum of 1 design discipline per group . Time limits and group sizes are clearly set out on page 36 of the specification.

Performers are assessed on 3 assessment areas, each worth up to 12 marks, up to a maximum of 36. The assessment areas are Vocal and Physical skills, Characterisation and Communication and Interpretation and Realisation of Artistic Intentions. **(AO2)**

Designers are also assessed on 3 assessments areas - their design Skills using materials within time and resource constraints, Design in Context and Communication as well as Interpretation and Realisation of Artistic Intentions. **(AO2)**

Marks for this NEA component are awarded as follows:

Monologue/Duologue/Design: 24

Group Performance/Design: 36

Total marks for Component 2: 60

Students are assessed as **performers/designers in a text in performance (AO2)**. Marking criteria is set out on pages 42-53 of the A Level specification.

Centres must refer to the Administrative Support Guide for guidance in completing preparation of their candidates and the paperwork for this component. All the requisite forms are available on the A Level section of the Pearson website. It is required for all components and includes information about all of the assessment procedures. It is updated annually with forms and deadlines that apply to the administration of all three components.

Centres are reminded that there are a number of resources available to support centres delivering the 2016 specification. Online support material is also available through the

Pearson/Edexcel website: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/drama-and-theatre2016.html>

Further support is available from the following services:

Subject specific content and teaching queries including *Ask the Expert* queries:
teachingperformingarts@pearson.com

Assessment administration including request for permission for non-assessed candidates, digital theatre, extension requests: drama.assessment@pearson.com

General centre related queries including reporting lost coursework, requesting special requirements, queries regarding entries and results: [Pearson Qualifications Support - Contact Us](#)

Centres are also advised that the FAQ page is regularly updated, and this is designed to answer questions regarding the delivery of the specification.

This report is designed to feedback to centres on the delivery of Component 2 and address some of the issues raised by both centres and examiners.

We are pleased to report both domestic and international centres had the choice of a visit by an examiner or a digital submission. Examiners reported there was an increase in larger centres, and those with more than 10 candidates, choosing to have a mix of live visit for groups and digital submission for monologue/duologues. It was reported this made booking dates much easier for larger centres. This mixed assessment approach is permitted.

Examiners reported seeing a full range of marks this season. There were instances of full marks being awarded for both the group performance and the monologues/duologues, as well as candidates receiving marks in the limited level. Proportional time penalties were applied to a number of monologue/duologue marks where work fell under the regulatory minimum time limit as set out on Appendix 8 of the specification. Centres must complete a form regarding text choice, as detailed on page 7 of the specification, this is then checked by Drama Assessment. It was made clear on the new form on the Pearson Website that any texts which did not appear could not be selected, and permission must be sought directly via Drama Assessment. Where appropriate permission was granted swiftly for new texts which have been added to the approved list for 2025 where appropriate.

Examiners reported a small number of centres still selecting 'forbidden' texts, i.e., texts offered for Component 3 in both Section B and Section C. This includes any and all versions of *Antigone* and *Fences*.

Each of these centres were reported to either the Maladministration or Malpractice teams depending on the circumstances and were followed up where necessary with the Heads of Centre.

It was reported by the examining team that some centres change to 'forbidden texts' following their initial submission or that some centres had failed to complete the text submission form. These centres were escalated to Drama Assessment who wrote to the heads of centre to report this failure to follow the rubric.

Most centres had read the specification for A Level and the ASG and had therefore prepared candidates appropriately for assessment. Centres are reminded that it is important that:

- the required forms are downloaded each series
- the correct paperwork is uploaded on time
- the guidance in the Specification, resources on the Pearson/Edexcel website and ASG is used for preparing for Component 2

Safeguarding

There has been a rise in the receptionists at centres requesting a DBS certificate for a live visit. Centres are reminded to read the Pearson Edexcel Safeguarding Children Policy on the website. Examiners must adhere to the Pearson Safeguarding Children Policy and will take photographic ID with them on all visits. Examiners should never be left alone with candidates in a centre and be escorted by a member of staff.

There now follows some specific observations from the examination team, based on the observations of Visiting Examiners and the Senior Team in 2025.

9DR0: GCSE Drama and Theatre 2025 Series

Component 2: Text in Performance (9DR0/02)

Performance Text Extracts

Students must study 2 key extracts from 2 different performance texts. A key extract in this case is a scene, moment or collection of moments significant to the text. Centres may select a continuous dialogue or scene or edited extracts for the group performance.

Centres must complete a form regarding text choice, as detailed on page 7 of the specification, this is then checked by Drama Assessment. All of the requirements for this component are detailed on pages 34 – 38 of the A Level specification. The text extract must be provided as a copy or scan of the original text to support the examination process. Centres must provide full texts at the centre visit for an examiner.

For the monologue/duologue, the extract can be edited to provide the right amount of material and remain a coherent performance. The performance texts selected by Centres for Section A and Section B must differ, either in terms of era, convention or genre, themes, form/structure or style, playwright(s) and/or context.

Centres are allowed to choose different performance texts for each group and each monologue, duologue, candidates do not need to all study the same texts or extracts. There were outstanding examples seen that the examiners noted were highly engaging.

Inappropriate direct address was still reported by examiners in many centres. This was the case for all candidates in some centres. Centres are reminded that the candidate demonstrating a clear understanding of the text in the context of the full performance is key to their achievement, it is not appropriate for candidates to reimagine a monologue in a new genre or location, as this would fail to demonstrate an understanding of the playwright's intentions.

The holistic approach to the specification means that the knowledge and understanding acquired through the study of one key extract from a performance text in Component 1 can be applied to assist in the interpretation, development and realisation of key extracts from contrasting performance texts. Similarly, the understanding of creating a performance can inform Sections B and C in Component 3.

The teaching hours spent directing the group performance or time spent facilitating monologues/duologues and wider reading on the texts from which the chosen extracts have been selected should address the implication and impact of social, historical and cultural contexts on the chosen texts and extracts.

There is a free choice of 2 texts for centres, *within constraints*. The text extracts selected must meet the criteria given on page 34 of the specification. They must be from plays professionally published, substantial and have a running time of at least 60 minutes to provide sufficient depth and offer students the opportunity to demonstrate exploratory range and depth that is appropriate to the demands of A Level study.

There were instances reported of monologues that had been downloaded/found in anthology books speeches and offered as stand-alone monologues, for which candidates have not been able to access a full script. This lack of access to the full script does not support candidates in understanding the context of the play or the style. This can be difficult when a candidate cannot understand to whom they are addressing a monologue, deciding to inappropriately address the audience, which in turn did not allow them to access the full monologue criteria.

The choice of performance text must also offer opportunity for students to respond as either performer and/or designer. **The requirement is that the texts in Component 2 must be different from the texts studied in Components 1 and 3,** and the vast majority of centres adhered to this requirement.

Unlike Components 1 and 3, centres do not need to select a specific practitioner or style of performance for this component, but there is an expectation that interpretations must include placing the key extract(s) in the context of the whole performance text. Where a performance is reimagined stylistically or to a new setting this can make it difficult for candidates to meet criteria relating to meeting the playwright's intentions.

Popular texts for Group Performances included: All the Little Lights, Eigengrau, 100, 2:22 A Ghost Story, 4:48 Psychosis, 5 Kinds of Silence, A Monster Calls, Be My Baby, Di, Viv ad Rose, Fear and Misery in the Third Reich, Girls Like That, Marat/Sade, Memory of Water, Metamorphosis, Monsters, My Mother Said, Our Country's Good, Pool, No Water, Road, Shakers, The 39 Steps, The Pillowman, The Trial, The Woman Who Cooked Her Husband, Things I Know to be True, Tissue and Top Girls .

Examiners report that the majority of group performances seem to have been to be teacher directed or led, examiners reported performances were less successful where the group appeared to have been left to self-direct.

Popular texts for Monologues or Duologues included: Things I Know to be True, Goodbye Charles, Prima Facia, Fleabag, 5 Kinds of Silence, Bull, Cock, Every Brilliant Thing, A Hundred Words for Snow, After Juliet, 4:48 Psychosis, Boys, BU21, Find Me, Frozen, Hamlet, Immaculate, Like A Virgin, Macbeth, Medea, Monsters, People, Places, Things, Posh, Punk Rock, Road, Romeo & Juliet, The Woman Who Cooked Her Husband, Two, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time and Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf.

Examiners reported that performances, and therefore candidates, were the most effective where teachers (often with candidates), had chosen appropriate texts for their cohort – whether that be that stylistically, length, edit or roles. Examiners reported that the vast majority of candidates seen appeared to be fully engaged in their performances.

In 2025 nearly all examiners reported seeing at least one monologue/duologue that had failed to meet the Ofqual regulatory minimum performance time of 2 minutes for a monologue or 5 minutes for a duologue. Centres are reminded that candidates should be preparing sufficient material to meet the minimum requirements for A level, as set out in the specification to avoid incurring penalties.

Quality of recordings, group sizes and timings

The majority of centres provided recordings that were clear in terms of visual and audio quality. The most effective recordings began with a clear image of the group in a long shot and candidates were then introduced by name and candidate numbers. Centres that used identification placards or an on-screen sign-system provide the examiner with a helpful visual aid for monitoring purposes. Examiners reported that it was effective when candidates introduced themselves by name, number, character and distinguishing features/costume choices. Examiners reported that dressing candidates in identical costumes, hair and make-up can make identification difficult in a short introduction to camera. It was reported that where there were candidates with identical appearances, these introductions took much longer. Centres are advised, to avoid long delays identifying candidates, to clearly define each candidate. Examiners reported small wristbands being used, sometimes under long sleeves to differentiate, which did

not work. Whereas other examiners reported excellent practice of colour coded costumes, a range of coloured ties or even sprayed hair used to differentiate quickly.

Centres are reminded that further guidance on 'Best practice when recording performance' is available on page 80 of the AL specification (Appendix 4).

The recording is an essential tool for monitoring and marking digital submissions or in case of a Review of Moderation or Marking. Centres are therefore advised to do as much as possible to ensure the quality of the recording is as high as possible. The camera should be in a position to capture the dynamics and details of the performance. Where the camera and the examiners were given 'the best seat in the house' this supported the digital examiners and the monitoring team in seeing the performance as best intended by the teacher-director. Examiners reported there were instances that felt like the examination came second to the performance elements or audience experience. Some centres used very dim lighting to create mood/atmosphere, limiting how much examiners could see of facial expressions and candidates themselves, or loud music was used to underscore action which drowned out candidates' dialogue.

Where digital marking occurred, examiners reported there were centres that had issues with candidates' faces bleached out by bright lighting states and/or positioning of the candidates onstage and/or the camera in relation to this. Similarly, the camera being set too close meant not taking in the width of the stage/all candidates or the recording was too distant, so that detail could not be seen by examiners, which disadvantaged candidates as the full evidence for AO2 could not be seen.

A digital submission or the monitoring of examiner marks is completed using the recording, and therefore the camera needs to have the 'best seat in the house', preferably as close to the examiner's view as possible. Examiners reported hearing about best practice in centres where a full mock had been completed previously, including a recording for candidates to review, and such issues had been picked up by the centre prior to the recording of the work.

To improve the overall quality of recordings:

- Centres should avoid low-lighting levels where possible.
- Candidates must be clearly seen on the recording. Examiners reported being unable to attribute marks to candidates as they could not tell who was speaking.
- Ensure white light/spotlights do not bleach out facial expressions when recording.
- Make sure that music/sound is not played too close to the camera/microphone as examiners report dominated/impaired vocal clarity in performance and digitally.
- Check the camera is placed in a central position to capture the performance, usually the 'best seat' in the house.
- Use costume to visually distinguish each candidate.
- Ensure that the microphone/sound recording is effective, prior to performance.

It is pleasing to report that examiners found no reported cases of students having to be awarded 0 marks for Group work failing to meet the minimum Ofqual regulatory minimum performance time of 6 minutes.

Audiences

Most centres chose to have an audience of family, friends and other candidates for the performances, in smaller centres this was for both the group and the monologue/duologue performances. Examiners reported that larger centres often chose to separate the group performances from the monologue/duologues. The group performances were usually performed in the evening to a larger audience, with monologue/duologue performances often in the school day to other drama classes. Examiners reported there were more and more centres choosing to have very small audiences and performed at the end of the school day when the centre was empty to support candidates.

Monologues or Duologues

It was clear many centres had selected text sections for monologues/duologues which well exceeded the maximum regulatory requirements. Any work that exceeded the maximum performance time was not able to be credited by examiners.

A full range of work was seen by the examining team. Lower-level work was found to demonstrate some or all of the following characteristics:

- The Monologue/Duologue is under the regulatory time limit
- There was a lack of vocal or physical technique or variety
- The text selected by the candidate lacked depth, or was too challenging or was too removed from the experience of the candidate for it to be effective
- The candidate was uneasy, lacked confidence or rushed the material

Examiners reported much work that was exciting, engaging and transported them from the exam hall, with candidates fully embracing the challenge of the examination and meeting criteria in creative and exciting ways.

Characteristics of top-level work included:

- Monologue/Duologue meets the regulatory time limit and does not exceed the maximum
- There was a range of vocal and physical techniques evidenced
- Text selected by candidate/teacher is sufficiently challenging, has depth
- Candidates are confident and appear to enjoy or make the most of their performance time
- Monologue, in keeping with the style/playwright's intentions, is addressed within 'the world of the play'

Inappropriate Direct Address

There are plenty of play texts where direct address is specified by the playwright. Direct address is rarely found in a scene when there is another character on stage, the obvious exception being a Shakespearian aside, which is not direct address.

Two of the five bullet points within the assessment criteria for a monologue/duologue would effectively not be able to be awarded any marks. When 2 out of 5 of the assessment indicators are not met at all, it would be hard to justify a candidate being marked as Assured or Sophisticated.

Candidates were therefore disadvantaged where their performance did not demonstrate an **understanding of the playwright's intentions** within the performance of the text as a whole. Candidates were most successful where the other character(s) being addressed was clearly indicated within the performance space by the candidate. As a rule of thumb – would this work in a full performance?

Group Performances

Examiners reported that Group Performances, and therefore candidates, were most effective where teachers had chosen appropriate texts for their cohort – be that stylistically, in length or in roles for candidates.

There was much variation in style and genre seen by examiners, with the influence of practitioners used in Component 1 and 3 perhaps influencing this.

Lower-level work was found to demonstrate some or all of the following characteristics:

- The candidate follows the ensemble, lacking attack/purpose/energy
- The performance lacks sense of ownership by candidates
- The text selected by the teacher(s) is too challenging or simplistic for the cohort
- There is a lack of vocal or physical technique and/or variety
- The role(s) in the group performance did not allow enough depth of characterisation or the candidate relies on the basic and obvious
- The candidate was not given sufficient stage time or too much stage time and was unable to maintain role, energy or dramatic tension
- The communication with the rest of the cast and the audience is limited
- The candidate lacks confidence or was uneasy and/or performed behind the cast/flow of the performance

Examiners reported that there were many innovative and effective performances, where the focus had been the strength of the cohort, with the candidates understanding the material and engaging with it.

Characteristics of top-level work for group work included:

- The candidate was capable of leading the ensemble, with commitment, purpose and energy

- The performance had a real sense of ownership for the candidates, they were engaged with the text, which had been explored and/or was within the sphere of their experience
- The text selected by teacher(s) was appropriate in challenge for the cohort
- There was a real range of vocal and physical technique demonstrated
- Their role allowed depth of characterisation and/or the candidate was able to multi role with confidence and distinction
- The candidates were given appropriate stage time and were therefore able to maintain their role(s), energy or dramatic tension
- The communication within the cast and the audience was sophisticated, and the candidates were well rehearsed and slick
- The candidates were confident and performed with focus

Design Candidates

There were instances of candidates for each design option for both Group Performance and Monologue/Duologues. In this first year of the specification, candidates did take the opportunity to both perform and design, in these cases the more common pathway was to design for the group performance and perform a monologue.

Lower-level Design work was found to demonstrate some or all of the following characteristics:

- The design did not enhance the performance for the audience
- The technical skill is limited and/or feels like it has not been worked on for the length of the rehearsal period
- The Design is not integral to the piece and feels like an afterthought or that the designer has worked in isolation from the performers
- The design lacked context, a sense of genre or style and/or link to the playwright's intentions of the piece
- The creative choices were obvious, limited or lack depth and detail

Characteristics of top-level Design work for group work included:

- The design fully enhanced the performance for the audience
- The technical skill is sophisticated and has clearly been worked on throughout the rehearsal period, not as a bolt-on
- The Design is integral to the piece and feels at the heart of the creative process and the designer has clearly worked with the performers
- The design has context, with a sense of genre or style and/or a link to the playwright's intentions for the piece
- The creative choices are sophisticated, authentic and with depth and detail

International Centres

This year all International Centres were once again offered a visiting examiner as well as the choice to have a digital examiner. These visits were carried out by a very small team

of examiners, some of whom were trained in both GCSE and A Level examining and were able to work at both levels in the same centre or region.

This team of examiners reported a similar range of text choices seen for both sections of the examination as previously mentioned in this report.

The vast majority of centres had accessed the ASG and were able to provide the examiner with the correct paperwork in time for the visit.

The evidence was that candidates had been well-prepared for the examination and supported through the process by the teacher(s). Where this was not the case, it was for similar reasons to those mentioned previously in this report with, for example the choice of the text for the group performance appearing to have been chosen without the specific needs and abilities of the group in mind.

Administration

Centres are advised to regularly visit the Edexcel homepage and ASG to ensure that the documentation and advice being used is the most current version.

Consortium Centres

Examiners are unable to tell if a centre is a consortium centre from their allocations. Several examiners reported contacting a centre that had already arranged a visit through a consortium centre. We thank centres for their patience where this occurred.

To support the inputting of individual centre and candidate marks in this case, examiners noted it was very helpful where centres had included each centre number with the candidate numbers for that centre on the centre register. This is in addition to Exams Officers reporting this to Pearson Edexcel.

The Principal Examiner and the examining team would like to take this opportunity to thank centres and candidates for all of their work in this return to the full specification for 9DR0/02.

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