

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

GCSE Drama (5DR02)
Paper 01/02 Exploring Play Texts

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5DR02 Exploring Play Texts

Introduction

The assessment of 5DR02 Exploration consists of 6 hours of practical drama exploring a playtext chosen to meet the needs, interests and abilities of the students concerned. While the choice of the play is the centres own it must be substantial enough to provide the opportunities and challenges for the students to meet both the specification requirements and the assessment criteria.

Paper 1 Students are assessed during 6 hours of practical drama exploring a playtext through selected extracts. The teacher led and assessed exploration of the text (A01) must involve the practical use of drama strategies, medium and elements for

Paper 2 Students also produce:

Up to 1,000 words documentary evidence (A03) evaluating their use of strategies, elements and medium, the work of others and their understanding of the play gained through the explored extracts.

Up to 2,000 words documentary response (A03) to live theatre seen at any point during the course.

Both papers are conducted under Controlled Assessment Conditions; notes taken after the practical sessions are made to enable students to complete their documentary responses under supervision.

In this first year of the new specification there was a range of excellent and interesting work from many centres for 5DR02: Exploring Play Texts submitted for moderation.

Choice of Playtext

Although a number of new playtexts were chosen by centres the most popular is still Blood Brothers with A Woman in Black a close second. Other popular texts were The Crucible, Teechers, A Doll's House, Metamorphosis and Blood Wedding. How the texts had been explored varied widely; the successful exploration of texts depended as much upon the level of challenge set by the teacher-led activities as the texts themselves. Accessible texts such as Legal Weapon and Too Much Punch for Judy were explored as successfully as Hamlet and The Tempest, for example, where the evidence showed that the students had been able to use their knowledge and understanding of drama to explore extracts in interesting and challenging ways. Over ambitious choices were as damaging as under challenging texts and tasks; intellectual understanding of a text did not enable students to use drama to explore the play at a high level if their practical drama skills had not been fully employed in the assessment.

There was concern that some students had not experienced working directly with a text at all; copies of extracts, scenarios and character outlines were provided for them to respond to and create their own scenes which affected their marks for both papers.

Records of Work

The choice of text, tasks and approaches are key to the exploration process of this unit but it was noted that a number of centres had used schemes of work from the previous specification which met the new requirements with varied success.

There was a significant rise in the number of published and circulated schemes as well as those adapted or created for the new specification. Centres who had balanced the needs and interests of their students with the requirements for the new specification were the most successful; the students had worked with key extracts from the whole play and the emphasis was upon the exploration process not performance. Published and circulated schemes were not always checked against the requirements and may be more appropriate for the programme of study than the summative assessment for 5DR02.

The presentation of records of work varied widely from lists of activities to pages of tabulated details for each session. Centre requirements such as learning objectives, connections with other curriculum areas, provision for gifted and talented etc was also evident but is not appropriate for the assessment of this unit. It was evident that many centres were most concerned to do the right thing by their students and had gone to much effort to ensure the evidence was clear for the moderator. Where each session had been clearly outlined to show the focus for each session, teacher led tasks involving drama strategies, medium and elements and opportunities for student choice of drama forms it was clear how the requirements and assessment objective had been met.

Tasks and Activities

Blood Brothers continues to be the most popular text because of its appeal to this age group, related issues and the opportunities to use varied approaches to exploration. However, it was often poorly explored, with an inappropriate emphasis on few scenes from the play and less on the content, character and plot development.

Where students had been challenged both by the playtext and the teacher led tasks they were able to meet the criteria more successfully. A significant number of centres appeared to be testing their students' ability to identify drama strategies, elements and medium in discussion rather than the ability to use them creatively in the process of exploration. It was noted that many centres also relied upon discussion to further understanding instead of structuring practical activities that explored the text in greater depth.

Centres that had high expectations of their students' ability to use drama fluently and provided challenging tasks ensured they were able to meet their potential.

The still image is the most commonly used strategy in the first session progressing to thoughts aloud or marking the moment but the level of challenge depended more upon how the tasks were set. For example, still image was used at a higher level where students were asked to respond to abstract themes from the chosen play, introducing concepts which emerged through subsequent work with the text in the same lesson. Where students also had opportunities to work independently within the planned structure they were able to combine their knowledge of drama strategies with the creative use of medium and elements.

The use of evaluation in the new specification was much misunderstood; A03 Evaluation is not assessed during practical sessions although discussion may contribute to the exploration process. Where students discussed one another's work in terms of how it had added to their understanding or provided a different viewpoint they were articulating an aspect of the exploration process. Too many were focused on aspects of performance and audience instead of further development in their own understanding of the play.

There was some misunderstanding of the requirements which led to certain centres focusing on the performance of sections of the play with sessions devoted to set and costume design rather than experimenting with elements and the drama medium as part of the process.

These issues permeated both the practical drama and the documentary responses; if the practical work did not meet the requirements nor could the written evidence.

Practical Evidence

The DVD recording and accompanying D2c: Sample Student Record Card enabled moderators to identify and track 5 students through a complete, taught session. This was successful where centres had selected the sample once the session had been marked and the top, middle and lowest marked students for that session had been identified as required. Centres were inventive about how their students might be identified; coloured and numbered PE tabards, non uniform clothing, different coloured T shirts etc all helped moderators to track the sample students through the session. The introductions varied widely but the most successful involved the whole class from which the sample had evidently been selected, cut and paste of the recording so that only the 5 were introduced, individuals approaching the camera one by one with names and student numbers and so on, all of which helped to make the sample clear.

Where the importance of the D2b and D2c forms was understood details of the session, the students and supporting comments on their work were most helpful to the moderation process.

In their zeal to ensure the sampled students could be seen, some centres moved the camera around the space but this was not as helpful as keeping it in a fixed point and only re angling to focus on group work and presentations. Despite the different locations in which the sessions took place most centres ensured that all the students could be seen and heard during discussions and when sharing their work. Where a variety of tasks were carried out in the recorded session and students could be seen using drama creatively to explore the chosen extract they met the criteria most successfully. This was more problematic where students spent most of the session working on a single group activity and presented work with little reflection or evidence of understanding in any depth.

Documentary Evidence

Centres' careful observation of the new Controlled Assessment Conditions meant that there was an increase in handwritten work although this did not affect the students' marks. The taking of notes at the end of practical sessions did lead to some students listing what had taken place in each session. There were fewer A3 pages with scrap book style entries which meant more students were able to focus on what had taken place in their practical assessments rather than layout and presentation.

The majority of students used the essay form to describe and discuss the experience, particularly those earning higher marks. Diagrams and photographs were used to illustrate and demonstrate which saved words and often enabled students to write in more depth. However, among those achieving marks in the middle and lower range there was the widespread use of bullet points, lists of the strategies, elements and drama medium used while roles on the wall and creative writing did not enable students to meet either requirements or criteria. It was noted that only a few students

failed to submit any written work.

In an effort to remain within the 1,000 word limit students often focused on the outcomes of tasks throughout the assessment which prevented them meeting the criteria at the higher levels. There was also an emphasis on what drama strategies, elements and medium had been used rather than how and why they had contributed to the exploration process. Those who focused on significant moments from the assessment were more successful at meeting the requirements and evaluating their work as a whole in depth.

The word limits were a challenge; most centres respected this and ensured their students kept within 1,000 words but others had not fully understood that any writing exceeding the limit could not be marked or moderated.

Documentary Response to Live Theatre

The word limit of 2,000 words for response to live theatre enabled students to use their drama terminology and the critical awareness gained during the course to discuss what they had seen in depth. *Blood Brothers* was the most frequently evaluated in the responses to live theatre with *A Woman in Black* a close second. Many centres took advantage of touring productions for their students to evaluate or provide access to the play they were to explore for the practical assessment. There were a number of interesting productions evaluated in different areas depending upon what was available and a number of students responded to school and amateur productions as well as examination performances for 5DR03.

There was more consistency in the quality of response. Most students commented on the narrative, production elements and some actors' performances in the productions they saw. Fewer reflected on their own reactions to the play and production as a whole. Students who had a wider experience of seeing live theatre were at an advantage although it was noted that those who were evaluating their first experience of live theatre often responded with a freshness and excitement that could be lacking in more formulaic work.

Administration

The D2a: Controlled Assessment Record Cards were best used by centres who illustrated their comments on the students' practical work with examples from the assessment. Similarly, comments that drew the moderator's attention to aspects of the documentary response moderation was more confident and secure. Most centres were careful to record accurate word counts for both parts of the documentary evidence but there were others where this was approximate and the students had clearly exceeded the maximum number of words which was inappropriate. Work was moderated up to the point where the word count was exceeded which may have disadvantaged some students.

The D2b: VHS/DVD Record Time Sheet was invaluable for moderators to understand the structure of the recorded session. Some centres had included details of where and with whom the sampled students were working at each stage which is not a requirement but was particularly useful for moderation.

The majority of centres completed the D2c: Sampled Students' Record Card. with care and had evidently selected their students as required. Some misunderstood the purpose of the form and entered marks and comments for the whole assessment not the sample session, an error compounded when lower marked students were absent

for the recorded session.

Some difficulties were experienced before deadlines were met; a few centres misunderstood that 5DR01 and 5DR02 were to be moderated separately and missing materials meant the moderation process was delayed until they had arrived. Fewer VHS recordings were sent for moderation but there were problems with DVDs that were damaged or did not play on domestic players; centres that had kept the originals were able to supply copies in good time.

Marking

Centres were largely over generous in their marking of both papers; there was a tendency to equate the previous bands with the new levels leading to overmarking. While the rank order of the sampled students and samples for documentary response were generally appropriate, those earning lower marks were accurately or slightly generously marked but further up the rank order the proportion of overmarking increased and a significant number were given full marks when the evidence provided met the criteria for good or excellent.

Students' marks were adjusted when the centre had not observed the requirements for the practical exploration, there had been insufficient work with the text and they were unable to make connections between the explored extracts and the whole play.

Although information had been forwarded to centres there were misunderstandings about the two sets of OPTEMs for Paper 01 (Practical Exploration A01) and Paper 02 (Documentary Response: A03). Centres are reminded that they must comply with all administrative procedures as outlined in the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) document.

The D2c: Sample Student Record Card is evidence for the recorded session only; marks and comments entered for the 5 students referred to their work in that session and not the overall assessment. Most centres understood this, but a significant number entered marks and comments for the whole 6 hour assessment which was inappropriate. Marks on the OPTEMs for Paper 01 are for the overall assessment; students earning the highest marks must have achieved this standard consistently throughout the 6 hours of practical drama work while there may be some variation between other students' marks on the D2c and those on the OPTEMs.

Conclusion

Overall the first series for 5DR02: Exploration was successfully taught, assessed and moderated. The discrete criteria and clearly outlined requirements ensured that centres understood what must be included in the assessed sessions and how the evidence to support the centre's marks must be provided.

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