



Pearson

Examiner's Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

Drama (1DR0/3B) Theatre Makers In Practice

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1DR0 GCSE Drama Summer 2023

Component 3: Theatre Makers in Practice

This examination requires candidates to show knowledge and understanding of the work of Theatre makers and their creative choices, and to analyse and evaluate their own experience of a live theatre performance, in terms of both performance and design.

The paper is split into two sections and is structured in terms of demand; this is most evident within the stepped questions in Section A. One hour and 45 minutes is allowed for candidates to complete this paper; this has been the case since the 2020 series.

Section A: Bringing Texts to Life

This section is worth 45 marks and offers a choice of six questions, each related to a single prescribed text that candidates will have explored in preparation for the examination. Candidates must answer all five sub-questions in relation to the single prescribed text on which they have been prepared.

Prescribed texts are divided into two lists to support centres in meeting the contrast requirements between the texts chosen for Component 2 and Component 3. Four new set texts were added to the specification this year and the paper was split into two discrete papers: 1DR03A (pre-1954 texts) and 1DR03B (post 2000 texts). Centres were required to submit the correct entry code for Component 3 to ensure that they received the correct Question Paper. There was also a requirement to indicate text choice on the GCSE Drama home page. This will also be required in 2024 and throughout the lifetime of the qualification.

When responding to Section A, candidates are required to tick the box corresponding to the question number denoting the set text studied. In 2023, titles of the texts were added to page 1 of the answer booklet to make this easier for candidates to complete.

More details regarding entry codes and text choices can be found on p.5-8, p.47-8, p.51 and p.74 of the issue 4 specification.

The single Assessment Objective for this part of the examination is AO3 (knowledge and understanding). Candidates need to consider how both performers, directors and designers practically realise ideas in performance to bring the text to life. They will respond to an unseen extract from the chosen text and are required to demonstrate knowledge of the whole text in their response to (b)(ii) and of the performance context in (b)(i).

Section B: Live Theatre Evaluation.

This section is worth 15 marks and is based on a theatre performance seen by candidates as a member of the audience. This performance **must not be** of a prescribed text from Component 3; zero marks were awarded to live theatre responses based on any

Component 3 set text, other than in exceptional circumstances, where advance permission had been granted by Pearson or where the set text was newly introduced.

Centres taking the examination this year had prepared candidates to see Live Performances as this requirement has been reinstated following the post-covid resumption of assessment. All centres, via examination officers, informed Pearson that this requirement had been met. Where centres had used live streamed/recorded productions for the live theatre evaluation, permission was granted by the Assessment team prior to the Component 3 examination date. Peer performances **are** permitted at GCSE level to provide the widest possible choice for GCSE candidates in responding to live theatre.

The single Assessment Objective for this part of the examination is AO4 (analyse and evaluate). Candidates must respond to two sub-questions, one considering the production seen in terms of design and the other considering the production seen in terms of performance skills. Candidates may use their live theatre evaluation notes, of up to a maximum of 500 words, to support responses to this part of the examination. Centres are reminded that notes must not be submitted with the examination paper; these must be retained by the centre and kept until after the post-results service deadline. Further details regarding live performance can be found on p.8 and p.49-50 of the issue 4 specification.

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Section A: Bringing Texts to Life

Candidates responded to all of the six texts available on the 1DR0/3B option paper, but *DNA* was significantly more popular than *100*, *1984*, *Blue Stockings*, *The Free9* or *Gone Too Far*.

Candidates were supported by the addition of the text titles next to the tick box to indicate which text/ question number they would be answering on, although some candidates became confused about this. Centres and candidates can be reassured with the knowledge that all responses were marked regardless of which box was ticked.

The majority of candidates answered on the text for which they had evidently been prepared for the examination, although there were a minority of candidates who responded to more than one text or who made an attempt at responding to a text with which they were clearly unfamiliar.

The majority of candidates also wrote their responses in the appropriate section of the answer booklet and made positive use of the extra space provided in the answer booklet. Where this did not happen for any reason, responses were reviewed by a senior examiner to ensure that no markable content was missed.

Q(a)(i) across all texts/questions, asked candidates to write as a performer playing a named character from the extract, offering two uses of vocal skills for that character. The

question also requires reasons for each choice to be offered, to support the candidate's knowledge and understanding of playing this character, at this moment in the text. Most candidates were able to fully meet the requirements of this question with the most common reason for candidates not achieving full marks being linked to misunderstanding the question. This tended to be where candidates had offered the wrong skill, for example non-verbal or physical rather than verbal. There were incomplete responses to this question and responses where candidates had offered no reasons for their choices or where reasons offered were inappropriate to the character. However, the majority of candidates had been well prepared for this question and were able to access all marks available.

Q(a)(ii) offered a short statement about a second named character and asked candidates to offer three suggestions about playing this character. Suggestions offered included a wide range of skills including non-verbal and use of space/proxemics, although the most popular choices were a mixture of physical and vocal examples. Some candidates offered more than one example of vocal and/or physical skills and this is permitted, as long as the examples focus on a different aspect of how the performance skill was used.

As with (a)(i), many candidates were able to fully meet the requirements of this question with the most common reason for candidates not achieving full marks being linked to misunderstanding the question and drifting away from the character statement or failing to link clearly to the extract provided. There were also incomplete responses to this question and in a minority of cases, reasons were repeated almost identically or were not offered.

In some cases, candidates offered more content than required to achieve full marks for these questions; the time spent on this may have negatively impacted on the time available for candidates to complete the medium and higher demand questions fully. Centres are strongly reminded to support candidates in practising making these responses short, sharp and clearly relevant to the question. The space provided on the allocated lines in the answer booklet is more than adequate to allow candidates to achieve the full 4 and 6 marks for these questions.

Q(b) - sub-question (i)

In terms of the stepped structure of the paper, Q(b)(i) is of medium demand requiring a more developed response than to Q(a)(i) and Q(a)(ii), with the candidate writing as a director. The maximum mark for this question is 9 and the question is assessed using a level-based mark scheme, made up of three levels. Candidates are asked to write as a director of the chosen extract, showing knowledge and understanding how one production element could be used to realise this extract in performance.

There is also a requirement within this question for candidates to **make reference to** the performance context: **the time when the play was created and performed**. Many candidates became confused about this, particularly where the play text had been created from a novel, for example, *1984* or was created in one time and set in another,

for example, *Blue Stockings*. There were also candidates who repeated the information stated at the beginning of each extract rather than using the context within their response. Please see the FAQ document (available on the website) for further guidance regarding context and the updated prescribed text guides, which offer information regarding the performance context to each text.

In the 2023 examination, candidates were offered the choice of three production elements: costume, set or staging furniture. The most popular choices were set and costume, with fewer candidates choosing to write about staging. A minority of candidates chose to write about two or three elements, limiting the marks available for their response, as marks can only be awarded for ideas relating to one production element.

In general, while a number of ideas were offered in almost all responses, candidates struggled to put their ideas into an appropriate directorial context, perhaps referring to a chosen performance style. Where this was done, candidates were often able to link concisely to the contextual information, for example, noting that the original performance of *Blue Stockings* was first performed on a thrust stage at the Globe on a minimalist stage which highlighted the individuality of the use of costume and that their naturalistic costume design would take the same approach.

Costume was a popular choice - responses offered a range of ideas for style, colour and fabric although not all of these aspects of costume were covered by all responses. Responses tended to show a grasp of the specified extract; where this was not the case, examiners struggled to find rewardable material for these examples. Similarly, there were a number of responses where choices were made that would work better on screen, in close up, rather than on stage, for example, details of jewellery that would not be visible for the majority of the audience in most performance spaces. There were also responses which offered inappropriate choices for the extract, for example, overcoats and hats worn by characters who had spent the entire play inside.

High-achieving responses offered ideas for costume which were clearly supported by the candidates' ideas for the performance of the extract, for example in terms of performance style and setting. These covered the specifics of fabric, costume and/or style and offered some understanding of how effects might be achieved, for example, stains or tears needed to show a specific character journey. Examples were theatrical rather than cinematic, and made helpful reference to the audience and the appropriate performance context, embedding this into their own ideas for costume. There was also a clear grasp of the difference between costume selected by a director (perhaps working with a designer) and clothes.

Set was also a popular choice, although this often yielded descriptive answers. An overlap of content between set and stage furniture was noted, with some set design questions focussing on the use of props/stage furniture, rather than placing these items within the set as a whole. Examiners marked these responses positively, rewarding all relevant ideas and disregarding ideas which drifted too far from the specified element. This question is

an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate creativity and originality of design, however often the higher-achieving candidates stayed closely in line with the original staging of the piece, using their understanding of the playwright's intention to influence their design ideas for set.

Higher-achieving responses on set offered creative and well-considered ideas which showed a clear grasp of using these design elements in performance. Technical language was used effectively with references made to terms such as flats, projection, trucks etc and there was a sense of detail to these ideas, which showed both a grasp of the role of the designer, and a clear consideration of the audience.

Staging was the most problematic choice for candidates, many of whom moved away from staging as a production element and drifted instead into writing about staging in terms of proxemics and blocking, offering ideas for the positioning of performers. This type of response struggled to meet the demands of the question as candidates were often writing as a director with a performance focus rather than as a director of staging as a production element.

Higher-achieving responses placed the extract on a specific stage or type of stage, made use of staging vocabulary such as exit/entrance, centre-stage, sightlines etc and referred to the way the stage allowed impact to be created for the audience in this specific extract. These were theatrical choices and made helpful reference to the appropriate performance context.

Please refer to the FAQ document (available on the website) for more details about staging as a design element.

Q(b) - sub-question (ii)

In terms of the stepped structure of the paper, Q(b)(ii) is of higher demand requiring extended and developed responses with the candidate writing as a director. The maximum mark for this question is 12 marks and the question is assessed using a level-based mark scheme, made up of three levels.

For Q(b)(ii) across all texts/questions, candidates were offered a short statement about a third named character. They were asked to write as a director, directing this character, considering the statement in terms of the extract and of the complete text. Three bullet points are included with this question, designed to support the candidate in structuring their response, and candidates must respond to all three bullet points in order to access all levels of achievement.

In 2023, while the majority of candidates were able to address the specifics of the extract effectively and show an understanding of performance skills, some lacked a clear focus on the choices candidates might make as a director, either drifting into writing as a performer or into writing about the character's choices in terms of voice, physicality and or stage space, rather than as a performer being directed. There were also responses

where candidates had made the choice to write about only one of the three bullet points, limiting the marks available.

The vast majority of responses demonstrated a solid and well-prepared grasp of how the chosen character might be realised in performance, considering all three bullet-points and using the viewpoint of the director. Higher-achieving responses also demonstrated the candidates' knowledge and understanding of working as a director of performers, and of the way this character, might be realised at this moment in the play compared with other key moments.

Q(c)

Q(c) is the highest demand question on the paper, requiring extended and developed responses, with the candidate writing as a designer and offering detailed design ideas for realising the extract practically. The maximum mark for this question is 14 marks and the question is assessed using a level-based mark scheme, made up of four levels, with this additional level reflecting the additional demand built into this question.

Candidates were asked to write as a designer of the chosen extract, showing knowledge and understanding how one design element could be used to realise this extract in performance. In 2023, candidates were offered the choice of three design elements: set, props/stage furniture and sound. Some candidates chose to write about all three elements, limiting the marks available for their response, as marks can only be awarded for ideas relating to one design element. The options were (anecdotally) equally popular.

The majority of candidates did manage to answer this question, often with some success. However, in many cases, there was a lack of understanding of the role of a designer and the application of technical vocabulary. Some candidates offered ideas which linked with the whole play or to the extended extract rather than the examination extract, but most tended to understand the content and potential of the specified scene. There were also some very short responses and some candidates were unable to complete this question due to timing issues.

Props/stage furniture was a popular choice, although this often yielded descriptive answers. An overlap of content between set and stage furniture was noted, with some responses considering the set as a whole. Examiners marked these responses positively, rewarding all relevant ideas and disregarding ideas which drifted too far from the specified element. This question is an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate creativity and originality of design, however often the higher achieving candidates stayed closely in line with the original staging of the piece, using their understanding of the playwright's intention to influence their design ideas for props/stage furniture and set.

Props were less successful as a design element with candidates sometimes mentioning how the props might be used by the actors on stage. Technical detail was often absent from these responses, with at times, a sense of the cinematic in place as props were described that the audience would have struggled to see from the auditorium. There

were also some ideas offered which were cinematic in other ways, for examples slowly deteriorating portraits with no consideration of how this effect would be achieved as part of a live performance. Many candidates were able to suggest helpful pieces of stage furniture, with consideration of positioning, size/ scale, style, colour and material as well as clear links to the way these items of stage furniture would be used by the actors within the extract.

Higher-achieving responses on props/stage furniture offered creative and well-considered ideas which showed a clear grasp of using these production elements in performance. Technical language was used effectively and there was a sense of detail to the ideas, which showed a real grasp of the role of the director, and a clear consideration of the audience.

Sound was popular option, with some effective and clear examples offered that often supported the realisation of the extract. Lower-achieving responses to this question lacked a clear grasp of how sound might be used to enhance the extract, offering inappropriate or general examples which lacked knowledge and understanding of the extract. There were also candidates who offered vocal examples rather than focussing on sound as a production element.

High-achieving responses offered ideas for sound which clearly enhanced the production of the extract, making use of existing stage directions/sound cues and using additional sound cues appropriately and creatively. There were ideas for diegetic and non-diegetic sound FX and a creative approach to sound was seen. There was a clear sense of how the sound would be used with technical vocabulary, including phrases such as surround sound, recorded sound FX, live sound FX and indications of volume/recording levels as well as helpful reference to the audience.

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Section B: Live Theatre Evaluation

Section B has only one question to which all candidates should respond: Question 7 which is broken down into two parts, a) and b). The questions are identical on both the 1DR0/3A and 1DR0/3B option papers.

For this section, candidates evaluate a production that they have seen 'live' as a member of an audience. Streamed and recorded performances were permitted under special circumstances and permission was sought from Drama Assessment by Centres to use a digital recording of a live theatre production for the purpose of Section B.

Centres have a free choice of production for this section of the examination, and as such candidates responded to an enormous range of productions. In 2023, candidates wrote about a live productions which included *A Christmas Carol*, *The Woman in Black*, *Life of Pi*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, *Medea*, Frantic Assembly's *Othello*, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, *The Play that Goes Wrong*, *Come from Away* and Complicite's *Drive Your Plow (over the Bones of the Dead)* A number of touring

productions such as *Broke*, as well as a range of streamed work from popular platforms including *Frankenstein*, *Peter Pan*, *Things I Know to be True*, *After Life*, and *One Man Two Guvnors*. Where streamed work was used, examiners reported that this option proved generally supportive to candidates, offering the opportunity to write about some high-quality archive productions.

There were some examples of pre-prepared answers seen through very similar responses which could have been due to teachers having too much input in the creation of live performance notes which candidates can bring into the examination with them. In these cases, candidates often struggled to provide appropriate evaluative comments as their focus was on repeating content from their notes. Centres are reminded that notes should act as an 'aide memoire', and that candidates should use these to support their analytical and evaluative skills. In addition, notes must be the candidate's own work, as per the teacher/ candidate authentication.

Some candidates wrote about musicals which had little impact on the 7b sub-question on set but did in some cases impact on the 7a sub-question as there was a tendency to analyse the use of song or the impact of singing without reference to sound design. There were also candidates who confused vocal skills with sound, and wrote about vocal skills in the performance seen rather than sound design.

A minority of candidates wrote about a performance of a Section A set text which is not permitted in Section B, and thus gained no marks for their response. Similarly, there were a minority of responses based on 'sung through' performances; these are also not permitted and were given zero marks.

Where candidates had seen devised GCSE pieces with limited set, responses struggled to offer relevant examples. However, the range of styles and performances highlighted the commitment of teachers in enabling candidates to experience a wide range of high quality theatre by the most appropriate method for the centre.

Overall, it was clear that this was the section of the examination where candidate responses appeared most rushed and where there seemed to be the highest proportion of unanswered or very brief questions. However, most candidates were able to respond with understanding and enthusiasm to the production about which they chose to write. There was also a clear focus on the question and the production from many candidates, and the level of analysis and evaluation was encouraging, with many secure and effective responses offered, even where candidates had struggled with timings across the whole paper.

Question 7 - sub-question (a)

This question is of low to medium demand, offering candidates a 'breather' after the high demand question at the end of Section A. The maximum mark for this question is 6 and the question is assessed using a level-based mark scheme, made up of three levels. Q 7 (a) asks the candidate to respond analytically as a member of the audience to one key

moment within the production seen. A moment was deemed to be a continuous section of stage time and candidates wrote about moments of varying length from those that lasted a few beats to moments that encompassed an entire scene.

This question was accessible to the majority of candidates, with many able to provide some analytical detail of how sound were used to create tension in one moment. Responses showed a wide range of observational detail and ability to analyse, but shorter responses could score just as highly as more extended ones if the detail was precise. Most candidates did attempt to analyse rather than just describe, and the most successful were those able to clearly link examples of how voice was used to create tension within a clearly defined moment.

There were responses which offered examples from two or more key moments from the production rather than staying focused on moment as required by the question. This compromised the level of analytical detail offered in these responses as marks could only be awarded for examples relating to one of the offered moments. There were also responses that focused on the use of voice and vocal skills by performers on stage, rather than live, recorded or amplified sound.

Higher-achieving responses to this question were clear, focused and often very succinct, with a wide range of detailed analysis offered. These responses allowed examiners to clearly appreciate the candidate's understanding of sound design and the impact they believed this had on the moment presented.

Question 7 - sub-question (b)

This question is of medium demand, providing a slight step up from 7 (a) for the final question on the paper. The maximum mark for this question is 9 and the question is assessed using a level-based mark scheme, made up of three levels. Q 7 (b) asks the candidate to respond analytically and evaluatively as a member of the audience. This was the question most likely to be incomplete or unanswered, suggesting that despite the additional 15 minutes, timing needs careful consideration when approaching the paper.

In 2023, the focus of the question was on how the use of physical skills created relationships within the performance. This question was accessible to the majority of candidates and was often answered with confidence. Candidates tended to offer a series of specific examples from within the performance, although there were those who focussed on a specific section of the performance. Most candidates were able to provide some analytical detail of physical skills and offered some evaluation, even where responses were very brief, and candidates had clearly struggled with timing. Some candidates struggled to connect physical skills to relationships, for example in an evaluation of 'Bouncers' by John Godber which concentrated on how actors changed roles, and changed gender but lacked information on the interaction with others in the scene or explicit understanding of how this created a relationship with the audience.

Higher-achieving responses to this question were coherent, concise and showed a strong understanding of physical performance skills, with a wide range of detailed analysis and linked evaluation offered. In these cases, candidates were able to refer to the way the physicality had been used to create believable and powerful relationships within the performance. These candidates also tended to place the audience at the heart of their response and demonstrated a clear sense of the candidate's understanding of the relationship create by performers with the audience.

Summary

Overall, examiners reported that while achievement appeared slightly mixed across a proportion of papers, the majority of candidates achieved at a comparable level to 2022. Candidates appear to be more aware of, and demonstrated a greater understanding of, theatre maker roles, in comparison to earlier series.

The most notable area for improvement is the differentiation of director (of production elements) in Q B (i) and designer in Q (c) where responses tend towards the superficial rather than giving very clear sense of the director or designer at work.

It was also evident that teachers and centres have worked extremely hard to bring their candidates back to the demands of the specification as normal, and in particular to allow them to engage with live performance work. This huge achievement was very pleasing to the whole examining team and to the assessment and subject support staff at Pearson.

Based on their candidates' performance on the paper, centres are offered the following advice:

- select a set text which fully supports the widest range of candidates within the cohort and make use of the Edexcel Pearson set text guides: https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/Drama/2016/teaching-and-learning-materials/GCSE_Set_Text_Guides_All_Texts.zip
- provide opportunities for practical exploration of the chosen set text, exploring a range of characters and scenes within the text and teaching the roles of theatre-makers from Section A: performers, directors and designers
- analyse the differences between the director's and designer's roles in terms of language, detail, practicality of ideas
- consider the demands of specific questions e.g. the time when the text was created and performed for Q(b)(i) and the complete text for Q(b)(ii)
- offer opportunities to see as wide a range of theatre as is practicable
- support candidates in creating their own live performance notes, which focus clearly on the possible demands of the Section B questions
- develop a wide subject-specific vocabulary for candidates
- focus candidates on reading and responding to the key words in each question
- provide regular opportunities for candidates to practise writing under timed conditions, drawing their attention to the marks available for each question
- offer candidates access to past/specimen papers and allow them to become familiar with the format of the current question paper and answer booklet

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