



Written Paper – SD865

The marking panel felt that the overall standard of responses this year was far more detailed than in the recent past. Teachers and candidates are to be commended for solid preparation. Reflection on and analysis of work throughout the year was both evident and well articulated.

Section A

The examination paper enabled candidates to answer in detail particularly given the change requiring comment on **two** live performances this year. This clearly enabled candidates to approach the examination with confidence.

Teachers are advised that musicals do not always provide enough evidence for questions which address actors and characterisation. They do, on the whole, provide ample opportunity for discussion of technical elements.

Adjectives such as ‘awesome’, ‘good’, ‘fantastic’, ‘interesting’ etc. are far too subjective unless accompanied by justification and detail.

Underlining of play titles is essential as it prevents confusion between the title of the play and the character, e.g. Macbeth the play and Macbeth the character.

Candidates should avoid merely re-telling the plot of each performance at the expense of addressing the requirements of the question.

When candidates addressed technical elements, subtle sets and lighting were referred to as being ‘simple’ rather than minimalistic, representational or symbolic.

At times the marking examiners felt that candidates were writing about productions in which they had performed with the result that they did not display appropriate objectivity. Candidates must NOT utilise a production they have personally been involved in as one of their two choices.

Section B

Questions 4-7 clearly enabled candidates to articulate the knowledge gained during the year. In most cases questions were answered fluently and in sufficient detail. The length of responses indicated ease with the material and excellent preparation by teachers and candidates.

The questions obviously enabled candidates to expand upon the process of rehearsal and performance and there was clear evidence of understanding in the content of responses.

In the majority of cases candidates answered all parts of the question equally, referring back to the language of the question and providing evidence to support their statements. Where a large number of responses were received from a particular examination centre, the breakdown of questions answered was fairly even demonstrating an ability to manipulate knowledge to any one of the four questions.

Generalisations are to be avoided, e.g. ‘characters did not play a huge role in the production’. Specific statements, justifications and examples must be given.

Whilst both scripted and experimental theatre responses were quite thorough there was a tendency in the scripted responses to merely re-tell the plot of the play rather than focus on the specifics of the candidates’ own production.

Practical Examination – SD865 and 875

The work in most centres was, on the whole, well prepared and presented. However, teachers are reminded that genre must be taught and understood. The manners, style and accent (where required) must be encompassed otherwise the piece should not be attempted. Some prose passages were far too long. Regrettably some plays were totally beyond the range and comprehension of the cast, e.g. *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* was not appropriate for a relatively limited group.

Solo work had, in some cases, been insufficiently vetted and overseen by teachers. In one centre a Roger Mc Gough poem was offered as prose! Candidates cannot achieve a satisfactory rating if the distinction between poetry and prose is not completely understood. Choice of material remains an issue. It is imperative that there is sufficient differentiation between the pieces presented to demonstrate the contrast in genre and style. Candidates are reminded that they must not ‘act out’ poetry and prose. Taking on the ‘characterisation’ of a poem or prose excerpt is quite inappropriate. E.g. A Seamus Heaney poem or a Mark Twain novel recited completely in an Irish or American accent! Such stratagems should be reserved for recorded speech.

The perennial issue of accents continues to persist. Clearly there are plays so strongly created in the ‘voice’ of the setting that failure to utilise the appropriate accent confines the interpretation to one dimension. If candidates are unable to apply the appropriate accent to either play excerpt or monologue, the task should NOT be attempted. Some prose pieces were performed in monologue style. Teachers have an obligation to ensure that genre is completely understood. Solo pieces should be both of equal length and degree of difficulty. Paraphrasing remains an issue. Candidates and teachers are reminded that approximations of material will be marked down.

Candidates are also reminded that monologues must be chosen from dramatic works. In some cases those presented did not come from a play at all! Often too, there was insufficient physicality and the excerpt was delivered like a piece of prose. Equally, the miming of every line of a Shakespearean monologue simply panders to an audience quite capable of understanding the spoken word.

Journals

Candidates often failed to fully utilise the material gathered, e.g. the viewing of a film or visitation to a retirement home can be appropriate to the context of the production but candidates often neglected to discuss HOW such activities informed either their role or the play as a whole. Many journals were informative, reflective and very well presented. Candidates should be reminded that this is a comparatively easy criterion on which to achieve a better than satisfactory rating if the task is undertaken with fidelity.

Chairpersons of assessment panels continue to make observations about the sense of occasion (or lack of!) in certain examination centres. Clearly there should be an audience present which is

supportive of the candidates and the undertaking. Teachers should be vigilant in ensuring that an appropriate atmosphere is created. Inattention and disruptive behaviour by certain audience members must not be countenanced. In one centre examiners were treated to the spectacle of adolescent ‘groping’ by a couple in the front row! Such inappropriate ‘performances’ may ironically serve to give evidence of greater veracity than those being presented for formal assessment!

In some centres the examiners’ copy of material to be presented was confusing or inadequately prepared. Examiners must be able to see at a glance what is about to be presented by each candidate in the group without being deflected from focussing on the candidate and the interpretation. There will be adjustments made to proforma sheets for presentation. These and associated matters will be discussed at moderation.

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