

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

DRAMA

J316

For first teaching in 2016

J316/04 Summer 2023 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 4 series overview

In general, this was another very good year in terms of the overall level and quality of candidate responses and it was good to see candidates producing such commendable work again. Most centres responded positively to this year's paper and it was very evident that most centres had thoroughly prepared candidates for this exam. Centres and candidates are once again to be congratulated on all their efforts. The mark average was again higher than in all previous seasons, which reflects the excellent work that centres are completing in order to thoroughly prepare candidates for the exam.

All Examiners commented very favourably on the quality of the work presented for examination in all nine questions and it was evident that most candidates were well informed and often highly detailed in their responses. Many question responses reflected a depth of knowledge and understanding and it was clear that centres had engaged in much excellent practical preparation and exploratory work. This had ultimately allowed candidates to explore and develop a very sound base of knowledge and understanding of their chosen text and it was clearly evident from the majority of candidates' responses, that they knew their texts very well indeed.

It was also pleasing again that all seven set texts had once again been utilised by centres. *'Blood Brothers'* was again the most popular choice of texts used, although there was an increase in the use of some of the other six texts. In general, many candidates had performed effectively and there were more candidates who performed well this year and fewer candidates who scored very low marks. It was pleasing to see how knowledgeable most candidates were in responding to questions which focused on technical aspects as well as performance and how specialist terminology was used to exemplify this. Examiners reported how encouraged they were with the way centres had prepared candidates to be able to meet the variety of requirements in this paper. It was also noted many times by all examiners that most candidates had coped well with the requirements of this examination and were very well prepared for all aspects of the paper.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • had prepared for all aspects of the exam well • understood and used theatrical terms and concepts appropriate to the text and play seen • did not over answer questions and run out of time • linked response back to their understanding of text and play seen • showed a good understanding of technical and performance aspects • had a clear understanding of how an actors and designers work to communicate ideas in performance • gave precise ideas, supported by justification linked to the text and plays seen: meaning; themes, ideas; characters • practically explored the text to aid knowledge and understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not always read the question carefully and underlined the key words • missed the opportunity to use the keywords from exam questions to keep the question in focus • missed out questions in Section A • used detailed description responses but did not answer the question • gave a pre-planned response rather than answering the question • offered vague descriptions when trying to support opinions on the live theatre review • lacked explicit detail in their work • missed the relevance of keywords and responded to a different aspect • sometimes had little understanding of the difference between description and analysis.

Section A overview

This section of the examination requires candidates to study and explore one chosen text from a list of seven plays identified within the specification. There are eight questions, each requiring a different response to a variety of skills needed to explore, develop and perform their chosen text.

Candidates need to develop a good knowledge of the whole of the play from a Director, Actor and Designer perspective with understanding informed by the original intentions of the playwright: the context of when it was written in relation to the social, cultural and political context; the creative challenges of the text for the Director, Actor and Designers and how they could be met; the impact of the text on an audience and the potential responses to key moments; the role and impact of characters within the piece; the use of semiotics, signs and signals; how characterisation can be explored, developed and presented in performance.

Many candidates had developed their understanding in most areas of their chosen text and their responses within the exam were often well informed and creative, with many candidates often successfully giving full and developed responses to most questions. Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding and justified/explained their responses in this section. It was once again evident that centres had fully prepared candidates for all potential areas of study in this section and encouraged candidates to be concise with their responses to early questions. There was a focus on technical and design aspects this year and it was pleasing that many candidates had clearly explored and engaged with this within centres. They demonstrated a clear understanding of the requirements of technical and design aspects, which had been clearly explored practically in lessons and were often linked to the wider contexts of their chosen texts. Candidates were generally good at offering a level of detail required to meet the requirements of each question and responses were often precise, well constructed and informative.

Question 1

1 From the list below, choose the character and their line from your performance text.

Identify **one facial expression and one movement** the actor would use when saying this line.

Explain how the **facial expression and movement** communicate meaning to the audience.

<i>Blood Brothers</i> : Mickey	How old are y', Eddie?
<i>Death of a Salesman</i> : Biff	Why does Dad mock me all the time?
<i>Find me</i> : Jean	It's as if she's taking some kind of revenge. But why? Why?
<i>Gizmo</i> : Ted	You go for a walk, they'll all start wanting to go for walks, won't they?
<i>Kindertransport</i> : Lil	D'you want to be bombed to bits, gassed till you choke?
<i>Missing Dan Nolan</i> : Greg	We've made a list of all the TV cameras in the area. Could you check them out for us?
<i>Misterman</i> : Thomas	Hey, what do you make of the gravel map of Ireland on the drowning sea?

Name of character

Facial expression

How it communicates meaning

.....

.....

Movement

How it communicates meaning

.....

..... [4]

This question was answered well by most candidates. Most candidates evidently identified a clear facial expression and movement and then explained how each communicated a meaning. Most candidates offered a generalised facial expression: sad; happy; concerned, etc, which was acceptable and most revealed an understanding or implied insight of the meaning this could bring to the character or audience also.

What did candidates do well?

Most candidates structured their response in good detail with the most successful addressing the question in a way which allowed them to clearly state their chosen facial expression/movement and then concisely describing what each communicated. The best responses were often where candidates were concise. Only a few candidates had not used the character listed in Question 1.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Any implied aspect was acceptable. However, some candidates described moments from their chosen text which had no movement or facial expression within them. No credit could be given here.

Question 2

- 2 Use the same character from Question 1. Identify **two** ways an actor could use voice to show the character's personality at any moment in your performance text.

Explain how each way of using voice shows the character's personality.

Use of voice 1

How it shows their personality

.....

.....

Use of voice 2

How it shows their personality

.....

..... **[4]**

This question was answered well by the vast majority of candidates. Candidates accurately identified two appropriate uses of voice and explaining how each showed or implied an aspect of personality. Only a very few candidates did not respond to this question.

What did candidates do well?

Examiners reported most candidates structured their response in good detail, the most successful addressing the question in a way which allowed them to clearly state the use of voice and then explain how this showed personality. It was again noted by examiners that most candidates were concise in their detail on this question for the marks available. Candidates who used the (wrong), same character from Question 1, albeit not the one listed, were still positively rewarded with this question.

What did candidates find a challenge?

The majority of candidates answered appropriately to this question. Only a few candidates did not respond appropriately to this question. The candidates' who did, tended to offer an item of costume or a physical movement. These are questions from previous papers and could not be rewarded.

Question 3

3 Identify **three** sound effects you could use to create drama in **one** key moment of your performance text.

Describe what each sound effect communicates to the audience.

Key moment

Sound effect	What is communicated
1	
2	
3	

[6]

This question was answered well by most candidates and only a minority did not focus their response on one key moment. It was evident that centres had explored the potential for a variety of sound effects in performance and candidates were fully aware of many different types and stated how each could be used to communicate a meaning.

What did candidates do well?

Most candidates were concise in their responses, listing three sound effects clearly and how they would communicate meaning, in a precise manner. Again this year, from some candidates, there were some overly full responses, often offering far more depth required for the marks available

What did candidates find a challenge?

Some candidates did not address what was asked for by the question and did not offer a sound effect. The response listed shows clearly how a higher responding candidate did not read and respond appropriately to the question. They do not identify any potential sound effects, yet if they had, their reasoning for what this could communicate is strong. No marks could be given for this response though as no sound effect is offered.

Read the question carefully

Reading the question fully should be impressed on all candidates by centres. Again this year, in responses throughout the paper, candidates of all levels often responded well in what they wanted to say about the moment or technique, but did not respond appropriately to the question.

Exemplar 1

<p>3 calm to loud then back to calm</p>	<p>to show the tension ^{of} in when they become blood brothers, as they still haven't realised there twins.</p>
-----------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The response listed shows clearly how a higher responding candidate did not read and respond appropriately to the question. They do not identify any potential sound effects, yet if they had, their reasoning for what this could communicate is strong. No marks could be given for this response though as no sound effect is offered.

Question 4

4 You are the costume designer for your performance text. Choose **one** character from your performance text.

Name of character

Identify **three** items of costume this character could wear that will show the audience something about their character.

Explain what each item of costume shows the audience about the character.

Item of costume	What the costume shows about the character
1	
2	
3	

[6]

This question was answered fully by nearly all candidates. The responses showed clearly the excellent design work completed in centres with candidates. Candidates clearly identified three suitable items of costume and then explained how each shows a meaning/creates an impact for this character. Many candidates offered an understanding of the potential impact their chosen costumes could have on the audiences understanding.

What did candidates do well?

Nearly all candidates structured their responses well, briefly stating a potential costume and clearly justifying why this was appropriate and what it showed about the character.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Any aspect that could be construed as costume or personal props that were relevant to the character was acceptable. Some candidates described items of hair and make-up, which if linked clearly to the relevance of the character, were accepted. Some candidates offered generalised props or hair design or did not state what their chosen costume communicates about the character, missing out on potential marks.

Question 5

5 Describe how a set design could be used to communicate a **setting (place and time)** for **one** key moment in your performance text.

Key moment

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [6]

Responses to this question were varied in detail. Most candidates answered with good knowledge and understanding of set design and candidates clearly identified practical ways of how they would creatively design a set for one key moment. Some candidates did not offer any links to how their chosen setting could imply/communicate a sense of place and/or time though, which prevented them achieving a Level 3 grade. There were, however, many good responses with some excellent examples of how set can communicate place and time with some excellent and carefully thought out and justified examples for how set can be used to communicate a range of place and time aspects.

What did candidates do well?

Many candidates described in detail the set they would create and described a range of examples to good effect. The best responses revealed a sound knowledge and understanding of set design, often giving full justification for their choice of set with excellent links to place and time. Stronger responses often revealed that candidates were able to use technical vocabulary well and although not a requirement, often discussed other design aspects; lights; sound; that enhanced their designs.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Only a minority of candidates responded to more than one key moment. Some candidates focused solely on where they would position characters or designed a set that was basic with minimal links to place. A significant minority of candidates responded to this question simply in terms of the social and historical context of the play with no reference to set at all. Some of these were very strong responses in relation to the social and historical aspects, but unfortunately as they contained little/no aspect of set design within them, they could only be given with a limited mark at best. In these instances, this was an example of candidates not reading the question or offering a pre-planned response from a previous paper. Also, some lower level responses were not practically suitable, e.g. creating a huge play park with trees, benches, etc with little or no concept of how that would be represented or created on the stage/set.

Question 6

6 You are an **actor** playing a character in the **closing scene/section** of your performance text.

Explain what skills you would use to communicate your role to the audience.

Name of character

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [8]

This was another really well-answered question and the majority of candidates responded with good knowledge and understanding. Candidates clearly understood the performance requirements for their chosen character and were able to offer a variety of skills/ practical ways of how they would communicate this role in performance, often with very sound justification. There was good application of both rehearsal and performance skills offered and higher scoring candidates often gave full responses incorporating a variety of skills.

What did candidates do well?

The best responses were often where candidates had described a full range of potential skills and backed this up with some clear knowledge and justification in relation to what this would communicate in the closing moments of the text. Those candidates who had explored this moment in rehearsal and reflected the practical work they had produced also often used specialist and technical vocabulary to enhance their responses. Some of the best responses revealed that candidates had also thought carefully about that character's representations, relationships and involvement within the play.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Any scene/section that be construed as from the 'closing' moments of the text was acceptable. Only a small minority of candidates discussed more than one character or offered a moment or scene that was clearly not from the closing sections. Again, some candidates describing the plot/sequence of events in the closing moments, rather than discussing the skills required to play the character in performance. Also, some responses simply listed a range of skills, gesture, facial expression, proxemics, voice etc, with little justification/examples of how these skills would help communicate the role.

Question 7

7 You are staging a version of your performance text.

Name what type of stage you would use.

Explain why this type of stage is suitable for performing your performance text.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
..... [8]

This question was generally answered well by most candidates. It was evident that centres had explored a variety of performance staging styles and candidates were fully aware of what each was and how it could be used. Most candidates clearly understood the specifics of their chosen stage and were able to offer some very sound practical examples of the requirements. More successful candidates were able to directly link their explanations to the impact of key moments in the play and some referenced the playwright's original intentions within this.

What did candidates do well?

Some of the best responses showed understanding of the text and vision of what to do with it – including specific references to key scenes or moments and suitable specific examples. Candidates were informed in their responses, discussing the advantages of the chosen stage clearly and how this could help communicate meaning and impact. The best responses were often where candidates had clearly explored using their chosen stage in a practical way and could successfully demonstrate the elements they had explored to develop the response. It was pleasing that so many different stage types were discussed and it was noted that a variety of plausible stage types could be used for any of the chosen texts.

What did candidates find a challenge?

Some candidates simply listed the requirements of a stage type with no link to the performance text at all. The question required a response in relation to the chosen stage type with an explanation/examples of why this would be suitable for the chosen text. The example listed clearly shows this. This candidate has an excellent understanding of 'Theatre In The Round', but offers no links to the play. To access a Level 3 mark for this question, there needed to be some recognition of how/why the chosen stage type was suitable for the text. Some responses focused purely on how the performance is 'usually' performed; In the Round; On a Proscenium Arch stage, and were very general. Other candidates selected a relevant stage space, but attempted to justify their ideas by using comparisons between their choice and other staging options, primarily by discussing the things that the other staging spaces could not provide, exploring the negatives of other stage choices rather than the positives of their own selection.

Exemplar 2

- in the round makes the audience - actor relationship more intimate
 - ↳ audience are in closer proximity to the stage
 - ↳ audience become more emotionally invested in the play and more likely to feel sympathy and pity for characters

The question required a response in relation to the chosen stage type with an explanation/examples of why this would be suitable for the chosen text. The example listed clearly shows this. This candidate has an excellent understanding of 'Theatre In The Round', but offers no links to the play.

Question 8

8 As a **lighting designer**, explain how you would use lighting to **develop drama** in the **opening scene/section** of your performance text.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [8]

This was another very positive question and was answered with high consistency from most candidates within the paper. Many candidates displayed an excellent knowledge and understanding of lighting and how it could be used to develop the drama of the opening scene and create mood, understanding and atmosphere. Candidates clearly identified lighting choices and were able to offer very practical ways of how this would develop the drama in performance. Candidates' who achieved a Level 3 mark for this question, ensured that all lighting choices were linked to developing the drama and any meaning, mood and atmosphere being evoked was distinct.

What did candidates do well?

Any scene/section that be construed as from the 'opening' of the text was acceptable. Many candidates offered clear examples of potential lighting and were highly specific in how each was able to develop the drama with clear understanding of a range of lighting terminology, from washes to gobos to barn doors, etc. The best responses were often where candidates had clearly explored lighting in a practical way for this section and then suggested clear ways on how they would apply this with clear justification.

What did candidates find a challenge?

A few candidates described fully the sequence of events that occur within the opening scene/section but did not respond in relation to lighting. A very small minority also offered responses in relation to moments that were clearly not from anywhere in the opening sections of the text, which the question required. This was often the case with lower scoring responses and only a limited mark could be offered here.

Section B overview

The quality of responses from candidates for Section B was generally strong this year. Candidates certainly had a lot to say about the performance they had watched. There were many excellent responses which fully explored the wording of the question and highlighted a genuine engagement from the candidates. This section of the examination required candidates to study, evaluate and analyse a favourite scene from their chosen performance and review why/how this scene impacted on them. It was noted by examiners that many candidates described several moments which could be construed as more than one scene. However, this was acceptable in the Mark Scheme as in many performances, the boundaries of scene breaks are not always explicit. Hence, it was explicit within the Mark Scheme to accept all the review from all candidates. Also, any analysis, from either a positive or negative perspective was equally valid.

Only a minority of candidates did not write the name, venue and date (month and year) of the live performance they had seen at the start of their response. Also, it was clear that many candidates were well prepared for this question. As in previous years, the choice of play was highly varied and many incorporated the use of digital performances, which is perfectly acceptable. It was again pleasing that the majority of candidate responses to this section were often detailed, thoughtful and displayed a full range of subject specific terminology to enhance the answers. Many candidate responses were insightful and balanced often revealing the candidates understanding of how drama and theatre are developed and performed and offering concise and thoughtful evaluation of their enjoyment of their chosen scene. Only a very small minority of candidates answered this question referring to the same performance text to the one they had studied for Section A. Many examiners noted that most candidates seemed to have engaged with the productions seen, and often responded well as members of the audience. A wide variety of production examples were selected and used to display a very sound knowledge and understanding of the chosen performance.

In general, there were many high scoring candidates who embraced the demands of the question in terms of their enjoyment and how the performance impacted on them as an audience member. However, one issue again noted by examiners was that there again appeared to be a number of 'pre-prepared' theatre reviews. Lots of candidates made direct reference to the 'playwright's intentions', using the specific language of the previous year's Section B question with no links to the wording requirements of this year's Section B question. Some of these candidates had prepared a potential response which covered every aspect of the performance in limited depth and did not focus on the specifics of the question, rather offering an overall review of the performance. These responses often did not include any reference to their favourite scene or what they liked/disliked. Candidates who did not respond to the question requirements, inevitably often only accessed lower band marks.

Key point call out

There are still a significant number of candidates who offer an introduction and conclusion to their Section B response which have no relevance to the question at all. It should be impressed on all candidates by centres that only responses that are relevant to the question can be rewarded by the Mark Scheme. The candidate response clearly shows an example of this with a high achieving candidate using significant time on a detailed introduction that could not be rewarded with any potential marks.

Question 9

9* Consider your favourite scene in the live performance you saw.

Evaluate why you enjoyed this scene.

In your answer, you could consider:

- the skills the actors used to effectively keep your attention
- how the actors communicated their characters to the audience
- the use of props, costume, set design, performance space
- how lighting and sound supported the scene
- how the scene supported the intention of the playwright.

You must use appropriate drama and theatre terminology.

[30]

What did candidates do well?

It was pleasing that most candidates had prepared well for this question, which allowed them to answer the question positively in a variety of ways. Most candidates did not have problems with answering the question fully and accurately.

Candidates who scored well in this question discussed and evaluated many of the following aspects:

The candidate was well prepared for this question, with very clear ideas/plans/structures in place to allow full responses to be given to the wording of the question.

Higher scoring candidates had numerous explanations as to why the scene was successful and the impact and enjoyment it had on them as an audience member was embedded throughout their response.

The candidate's use of specialist drama and theatre terminology was highly developed and integrated throughout their response.

Candidates offered a highly developed understanding of how meaning is communicated to an audience in a live performance and their line of reasoning throughout their response was well-developed, sustained, relevant and logically structured

The response was clearly focused on the analysis of a favourite scene or section and the impact on them, as an audience member.

Most were detailed with a variety of production values and different areas to discuss and most were engaged.

The strongest responses were often those, which placed their individual response at the heart of the response and then wove a discussion of a range of dramatic and theatrical techniques around it.

The positive and/or negative impacts of a range of dramatic and theatrical skills were discussed surrounding the performance and the candidates' enjoyment.

The impact the scene had on the candidate as an audience member was at the heart of the response.

Clear examples were used to support their evaluative statements about the performance and the role/impact of a range of skills and techniques on them, as an audience member were displayed

Clear examples used which were relevant to the performance seen, not dependent on the script.

The impact on them as an audience member was discussed in detail in relation to the use of a range of skills and techniques.

Higher grade responses from candidates often evaluated a range of aspects: the actors; characters; directorial choices; use of set; lights; costume; sound; performance skills and many other worthy components of the performance seen.

What did candidates find a challenge?

- Using the time allocated to this question to its full potential.
- Focused on an introduction/conclusion , with little focus on the question
- Lower scoring candidates struggled to respond to the impact and enjoyment the performance had on them and were descriptive rather than evaluative
- Some candidates spent a great deal of time describing in detail: the play, plot, key themes/messages given within the piece, but did not link this back to the question.
- Candidates who offered a 'pre-prepared' response did not adapt this to meet the question's needs
- Using subject specific language and terminology was often limited in these responses also
- Basic opinions were expressed on the production which focused on description rather than analysis
- Examples given to support the candidates analysis lacked specific detail and tended to focus on only one or two aspects of the performance
- Weaker responses focused on aspects that were not relevant to the question
- Revealed on an understanding of the text, rather than evaluating the seen performance
- over discussed the practicalities of the performance, rather than the impact on them, as an audience member
- Did not grasp the essence of the question, with a simplistic and un- developed line of reasoning
- Some candidates struggled to move beyond the lower levels due to a lack of precision in their analysis and evaluation often making sweeping statements in order to move onto their next point
- Some candidates struggled with the balance of analysis and evaluation, often favouring one over the other
- A few candidates who had watched a recorded versions of a live show, focused mainly on camera angles, lens movement and editing.

Some live performances used

The Woman in Black

The Ocean at the End of the Lane

Peter Pan

One Man Two Guvnors

Noughts and Crosses

Treasure Island

Frankenstein

Billy Elliot

Things I Know to Be True

Bouncers

Romeo and Juliet

Teechers

To Kill a Mockingbird

An Inspector Calls

The Play That Goes Wrong

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

War Horse

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time

Cinderella

Wonderland

A Christmas Carol

Othello

Hamilton

Macbeth

Falling

Shawshank Redemption

Canterville Ghost

Small Island

Witness for the Prosecution

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Life of Pi

Matilda

Juliet

Kinky Boots

Hex

Jekyll and Hyde

Cookies on Line

Lord of the Flies

War Horse

Shrek The Musical

Standing at the Sky's Edge

DNA

Rise Up

The Lion King

Annie

Wuthering Heights

Beautiful Thing

Henry V

Everyone's Talking About Jamie

Can I Live?

Exemplar 3

On the 9th June 2022, we went to see the Woman in Black at the Fortune Theatre directed by Robin Hereford. The Actor Matthew Spencer and Arthur Kipps played by Chris Gilling multi-roled throughout the performance to give the illusion there were multiple people and characters on stage with the overall artistic intention to scare the audience using minimalism as it is a thriller. ~~My~~ ~~favourite~~ My favourite scene wa

There are still a significant number of candidates who offer an introduction and conclusion to their Section B response which have no relevance to the question at all. It should be impressed on all candidates by centres that only responses that are relevant to the question can be rewarded by the Mark Scheme. The candidate response clearly shows an example of this with a high achieving candidate using significant time on a detailed introduction that could not be rewarded with any potential marks.

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