

Online Example Materials

Reference Material: Commentaries

GCE in Drama

6DR04 – Unit 4: Theatre Text in Context

Issued: 2012/13

This commentary has been compiled by the principal examiner for this unit to support the work of centres in preparing candidates for 6DR04/01, the written examination in the A2 year of Edexcel's Drama and Theatre Studies specification.

The three scripts selected are by candidates who earned at least a grade A in this unit in the 2012 series of examinations and the scripts and commentary should be read in conjunction with the published Mark Scheme for this unit, the specification requirements, specifically in relation to the demands of Unit 4 and the Examiners' Report for this unit from 2011 and 2012. All materials referred to are available to download from the Edexcel website.

There is one script that focuses on each of the three possible texts for Unit 4 as follows:

- Script A is 'Lysistrata' (57 marks in total)
- Script B is 'Doctor Faustus' (55 marks in total)
- Script C is 'Woyzeck' (65 marks in total)

This commentary will take each script in turn and highlight the features of these responses that earned the candidate marks in relation to the mark scheme. In the conclusion, there will be some thoughts concerning common features of these responses that have enabled these candidates to access the marks but centres are reminded that these are three examples from a range of candidates' responses and that there are other ways of structuring answers in order to access marks in this unit.

Example Script A 'Lysistrata'**Section C (Level 5: 28 marks)**

This response to propeller's production of 'Henry V' is confident and well-structured. It clearly addresses the specific demands of the statement and uses relevant examples in support of the discussion.

The candidate sets out the intentions of the response in the opening paragraph and immediately makes connections to both an understanding of the play's opc and the specific demands of the statement. The end of the opening paragraph on page 23 sets out the candidate's approach to the statement and, importantly, also uses this connection to reference an understanding of the play's opc. The response then develops with examples in place to develop the discussion around the statement, with the candidate able to offer clear evaluative comments about the experience as an informed member of the audience.

By focusing on specific examples from the production, the candidate is able to expand on and explore these in relation to the question and the opc and, more importantly, offer considered opinions that connect into an understanding of the production as a whole. There is a skill in approaching a response in this way, rather than attempting to cover everything there is to cover in the response just to demonstrate that the candidate has understood more of the experience than the question demands. There is only so much information can be presented in approximately 55 minutes and part of the process of preparing for this section is being able to select what might be relevant in relation to the kind of question that might be asked. This point is developed further in the Examiners' Reports from 2012 and 2011.

The concluding paragraph in this response follows on logically from the stated intention on the second page, with the candidate confident in supporting the discussion with examples that lead to the conclusion. This is a personal response and it is clear that the candidate was part of the live experience and was able to articulate an understanding of that in relation to the play's opc. There is a balance in the response between the live experience and the historical context but, importantly, the candidate leads the answer with the live experience, rather than presenting an historical perspective with only some reference to the performance seen live.

This is clearly a level 5 response. All of the elements are in place and the candidate has addressed the question with carefully chosen and well-articulated examples in place to support the discussion. This is a 'coherent and knowledgeable' response.

Section B (Level 3: 18 marks)

The first page of this response clearly sets out the intentions of the piece and the concept in relation to the opc and a direct connection to the question – the word ‘relevant’ is used in the first line, for example. The context of the original performance is detailed in the first two pages and there is evidence here of an understanding of Aristophanes’ intentions as far as we know them.

The final sentence of the first paragraph on page 16 for example connects intentions for the audience with understanding of the play’s context and leads into the first defined example of how this might be achieved in the production. The examples used in support of the discussion are then detailed in the response, each one supported by reasons and with connections made to the play’s opc.

Clearly the candidate has considered the response and has prepared a concept that is effectively detailed in a well-structured answer – the use of paragraphs, for example, takes the reader through the changing emphasis of the information presented and defines the discussion to some good effect.

Whilst there are examples in place of how the candidate will seek to make the production relevant, supported by specific moments from the production, there is little sense of the production as a whole. The opening paragraph sets out the ideas behind the proposed production - very clearly, even down to the auditorium that the production will be performed in – but there is little of this information developed in the response itself. St. Paul’s is mentioned twice more in the response – on page 18 for the chorus of old men and on page 19 for Reconciliation, for example. With specific connections made to an understanding of the opc within the response, there should be an expectation that the use of the space is more clearly focused upon in the answer – the chorus of old men hiding behind the pillars of St Paul’s, for example takes them out of the ‘orchestra’ (as defined on page 15) but this is not explored as a connecting point in the discussion.

There are clearly well-considered ideas here and there is an attempt at addressing the question in relation to an understanding of the play’s opc – the discussion on pages 19 into 20 about the representation of Reconciliation and Lysistrata for a 21st century audience is well-considered and has merit, for example. What is not so well developed is the aim stated on page 16 of reminding the audience of the ‘omnipresent horrors of war’.

In placing this response at the top of Level 3, there is recognition of the ideas and the connections made to the play’s opc. There is more information here than would be expected in a Level 2 response, but not sufficient development around the specifics of the question or the stated concept to take it into Level 4.

The response is about the right length when the size of handwriting is taken into account and, whilst there is no hard and fast rule about this, the space available in the booklet for Section B and Section C is the space that it might reasonably be expected a candidate at this level of study might use in order to sufficiently develop a response to the chosen question.

Section A (11 marks)

The candidate struggles to engage with the specific of the question, particularly in a) and b) but also to some extent in c).

The 'grouping of the women', in a) for example lacks defined purpose in relation to the question – particularly in the second example. In b) there is not sufficient justification of the ideas, particularly the third one where it appears that the candidate may have run out of time – or ideas at this point. For up to 6 marks, there is an expectation that the examples chosen will be 'appropriate' and there will be a balance in the response.

The c) response was placed at the top of Level 2 in the mark scheme. The intention is clearly stated at the start of the response and then there is a development to show how this is going to be achieved. The examples are in place and supported by reasons but they are not sufficiently developed to enable the candidate to access Level 3. The three ideas used here have merit and it is important to see them connected within the stated aim at the start of the response. It appears that this candidate is structuring a response with an intention in mind, rather than listing techniques/methods in isolation, thus giving more purpose to the rehearsal exercise.

Example Script B 'Doctor Faustus'**Section C (Level 4: 23 marks)**

The candidate sets out the response to the statement on page 23 and writes in the opening page or so about the experience of entering the auditorium before the performance starts. As a way of settling into the response this could be a useful technique for candidates preparing for this section – 'what were your first impressions?' – enabling them to take the examiner logically through the experience, supporting the discussion with specific examples.

Page 24 has a clear example of the candidate connecting to the experience, the opc and the statement. The main paragraph on this page is well-structured and is used to demonstrate the candidate's understanding of the experience. The response then develops using specific examples to support the connections made.

The language used, particularly some of the phrasing, is a little clumsy at times with the candidate, possibly, trying to be too distant from the experience rather than offering a personal response as a student of Drama and Theatre Studies. The conclusions drawn, however, follow on logically from the initial stated response to the statement and the concluding paragraph draws the ideas together. There is some ambiguous connecting to the play's opc – reference to the use of the 'orchestra', for example – page 24 – and the representation of murdered bodies with puppets is not sufficiently explored but there is only so much information that a candidate can present in the given time in response to the question.

This is a Level 4 response which clearly makes connections between the live performance, the play's opc and the statement. Examples are in place and are supported, there is certainly more here than reporting the experience. The candidate has considered the live production and set it against the play's opc and has used this information to structure a response to the question and, more importantly, to reflect on the statement.

Section B (Level 3: 18 marks)

The opening paragraph sets out the intentions of the piece and immediately there is a sense of engagement here but there is also a major challenge the candidate sets – to convince with a 'naturalistic style version' of the play.

The second challenge for the candidate is to explore the 'school setting' of the proposed production in order to convince that this is a production concept for Marlowe's 'Doctor Faustus' and not for a new play based on the original.

The third challenge is on page 16 where the 'promenade' style is defined, with reasoning and the connection is made with the play's opc at this point.

The response then develops with examples in support and connections made to the play's opc. The structure works and there appears to be a logical progression through the ideas. What is not always clear is the way the 'naturalistic style version' of the play sits within the promenade performance, during which 'characters...change costumes...in front of audience' (page 17).

There are examples from the production used to demonstrate connections with the play's opc and to define the experience for the audience. The examples tend to be focused around characters which imply specific moments within the production and, whilst there is nothing to say that a response cannot work in this way, it is possible that the 'set pieces' of the play in this production would have provided a more stable structure within which the candidate could have explored ideas. It is also possible that a drawing/diagram of the promenade space(s) would have helped to define the ideas more clearly.

Some understanding of the play's opc is present in the response and, whilst this does not automatically guarantee a Level 4 or Level 5 mark, without it there is a ceiling that the response can reach. There is sufficient evidence in the response as a whole to place it in Level 3, even though the sum of the parts does not necessarily make up a whole as presented here. The examples chosen show understanding of specific theatrical effects and intentions – the use of light on pages 19 into 20 to define 'Lucifer' and 'Angels' sits within an overall intention and is detailed in relation to 'normal lighting' and its implied connection to the play's opc.

There is sufficient connection to the proposed production, the play's opc and the audience to place this response in Level 3, with examples in place to justify a mark at the top of this band. Whilst some of the stated challenges at the start of the response are not fully addressed, the mark is awarded for what is here, rather than for what might have been presented.

The response is about the right length for this section and for this level of study, using the available space within the booklet.

Section A (14 marks)

There is a consistency across the three parts of the question but the candidate does struggle a little in c) to demonstrate an understanding of exploring 'verbal communication' in the extract. The examples used are generally valid but not then sufficiently explained in order to connect with the specifics of the question. 'Eye Contact' and 'verbal communication' does need some explaining which is not here in order to be able to demonstrate the connection that the candidate is looking for. The examiner marks what is here, not what might have been intended and it is clear that this response, in Level 2, has elements missing that would have placed it in Level 3. It is about the right length, it has a confidence in the response – after the initial mention of 'non-verbal communication'. The 'tug

of war' example is the strongest here, with some clear explanation of purpose but it can be seen that others have merit too, they just lacked sufficient expansion to connect with the demands of the question.

There is confidence in b) and a) and connections made to the specific demands of the extract and, more importantly, the question. There is a sense of 'this is what I would do. This is why I would do it and this is an example from the extract to demonstrate my intentions'. Rehearsal is at the centre of the responses as a whole and the candidate has chosen methods/strategies with purpose.

Example Script C 'Woyzeck'

Section C (Level 5: 26 marks)

The candidate sets off with confidence to evaluate the use of stage space in the production of 'Romeo and Juliet' in relation to an understanding of its original performance context. The discussion develops around differences and similarities and the examples used are supported by evaluative statements - the use of the balcony is explored on page 24, for example.

The structure of the response in paragraphs that each develop a different aspect of connecting the live experience with an understanding of its opc and the specific demands of the question enables the candidate to formulate a response that covers a range of production elements within the overall demands of the question. The first few lines on page 27, for example, start to bring the ideas to a logical conclusion and draw together the thoughts explored in the preceding pages.

Use of stage space is at the centre of the response and by stating that the live experience is set within a proscenium arch and is therefore different from its opc, the candidate is then able to develop ideas around this one major difference between 'then' and 'now'.

There is some distancing from the experience, it would have been interesting to have a more personal response, rather than an overview of 'audience' but there is a clear sense of engagement and understanding demonstrated here with the candidate clearly able to offer opinions based on understanding. A good example of this is at the top of page 25 where the candidate is able to state an understanding of the play's opc and then use this to evaluate an aspect of the performance seen live. This ability to use information to support discussion, rather than just present facts with little or no connection made is often a feature of a candidate who will earn marks in the higher levels of this unit.

By placing this response in Level 5, there is a recognition of the connections made, supported by examples and evaluative statements to demonstrate understanding. This is a 'coherent and knowledgeable' response.

The response is about the right length. Whilst there is no hard and fast rule about this, there is an expectation that the space in the booklet for the question should indicate the length of response with size of hand writing taken into account.

Section B (Level 4: 24 marks)

There is evidence within this response of connecting to the play's opc and of the candidate using this information to support decisions made within the response in relation to the question. There are examples of connections made in relation

to both of the chosen visual elements, with some clear references to audience to support ideas presented. There is an overall balance in the response with a clear introduction to the ideas to be presented that helps define the concept.

The candidate's understanding of the play is evident and the chosen focus would engage a 21st century audience and can easily be visualised as defined here. The opening paragraph on page 15 sets the context of the concept and engages immediately, with the specifics of the question starting to be addressed by the last few lines on the page. There is a confidence in the response and other candidates have successfully engaged in a similar way, with the opening paragraph defining for the examiner the thinking behind the concept before specifically addressing the question.

There is sufficient connection to the play's opc to take the response above Level 3 in the Mark Scheme, but not sufficient engagement to take it into Level 5. This response must therefore be placed in Level 4. Connections can be seen at the bottom of page 16, into page 17 and on pages 18 and 19. These connections relate to the original performance of the play in 1913 and further information regarding what an examiner is looking for in connecting with the opc of this play can be found in the Examiners' Reports from 2011 and 2012.

What this candidate does with the references to the opc, is to embed them within the concept so they become part of the thinking behind the performance, rather than inserted in the answer because this is a requirement in this section. This demonstrates higher level thinking in this unit and is a clear indicator as to why the response is placed at the top of Level 4, rather than towards the lower end.

The response is about the right length if the size of the handwriting is taken into account. The space allowed in the booklet is about what might be expected from a student at this level of study for up to 30 marks. Some responses will fill the space, others will use diagrams to support the discussion and, whilst there cannot be a hard and fast rule about this, there is an expectation of a developed response using the available space in order to access the higher levels of marks.

Section A (15 marks)

There is a consistency across all three parts of the response, with specific examples in place that connect to the extract and to the demands of the question. The techniques/methods used are appropriate for the demands of the question and the extract and are used to demonstrate purpose for the actors preparing the extract for performance.

In b) the use of 'hot seating' could be an appropriate technique to explore this relationship at this time and the candidate is able to justify it but is then not specific enough in the kind of questions that might be asked. This is the detail

that could demonstrate a depth of understanding that would enable a candidate to access the higher levels of marks.

The structure of c) is a bit of list but each technique/method that is presented is described and justified to demonstrate understanding and purpose. It could be that a response that had more of a practical flow to connect the rehearsal strategies might have earned marks in the top band. There are 6 techniques presented here, perhaps 5 with more detail might have been more appropriate but, as the question does not specify, it is only possible to say that there needs to be more than 3 as part b) states 'three appropriate' for 6 marks. This response is placed in Level 3 – just – and does therefore have merit and meets the criteria for Level 3 in the mark scheme but it is very much on the cusp of Level 2 and this could be because of the lack of depth in the examples used for up to 10 marks.

The candidate's response for a) was confident and clear and earned full marks. There is sufficient detail here to demonstrate a connection with the specific demands of the question and the rehearsal.

Conclusion

One of the main features of a response that enables a candidate to access the higher levels of marks is one that addresses the question. Whilst preparation for this unit is crucial, candidates need to be able to apply knowledge gained in structuring responses to the specific demands of the question in the examination.

Examiners expect that candidates will have prepared. For Sections A and B, candidates will have annotated copies of the chosen text in the examination room with them, and, for Section C notes to support the chosen performance. What separates candidates, who struggle from those who succeed in this unit, tends to be the ability to address the specifics of the question rather than launch into the 'prepared' response.

The ability to demonstrate an understanding of the play's original performance context is vital for candidates who are looking to access the higher levels of marks in Section B and Section C. This does not mean, of course, that the opc must dominate the response but what it does mean is that there is sufficient evidence in the answer for the candidate to indicate an understanding of where the play has come from in order to demonstrate an understanding of where it is going. The application of this knowledge is essentially the same in Section B and Section C, although candidates are reflecting on the performance in Section C, whilst in Section B they are setting out to engage with their own concept as director.

Without sufficient reference to the opc, responses in Section B and Section C will struggle to access more than Level 3 in the mark scheme. Consider the responses presented here and note that all 3 Section C responses are stronger than all 3 Section B responses. This tended to be the case across the cohort as a whole, where candidates often struggled with engaging with the specifics of the question in Section B. It could be that preparation for the Theatre Evaluation in Unit 1 is being revisited for Section C and it is also likely that, because the Section is effectively a self-contained experience within the unit, centres are being much more focused in their approach to it. There is a confidence in the responses to Section C that is not always present in Section B, almost as if candidates are afraid of 'getting it wrong' in Section B.

The choice of performance for Section C could be important – in these samples we have 2 Shakespeare and 1 Euripides – in enabling candidates to be able to structure responses. In the vast majority of cases, candidates respond to a 21st century production of a play by Shakespeare and, unless the choice of text in the unit is 'Doctor Faustus', then there is nothing to prevent centres from choosing Shakespeare in performance. In the three samples, the candidates are clearly responding to the performances, not the plays and this is a major feature of candidates who are able to score at the higher levels in this section. Often,

students of English 'A' Level struggle here with very literary analyses of plays rather than performances.

All three responses here are to performances of plays originally written and performed in the stated time periods. In some cases, examiners have been unable to award marks for responses to productions of plays that have either been based on the original (as a rough guide, a different title will indicate that it is not a production of...., but a production based on....) or based on literary works that were not originally theatrical performances. There is some further expansion of this point in the Examiners' Reports from 2011 and 2012.

The marks awarded for the Section B responses presented here vary from the top of Level 3 to the top of Level 4. Where candidates accessed Level 4 and Level 5 in 2012, it was with responses that addressed the specifics of the question in relation to the concept that demonstrated an understanding of the play's original performance context. Script C ('Woyzeck') Section B contained sufficient connections to enable it to earn marks at the top of Level 4 and this response must be read in conjunction with the other two scripts. Whilst, for example, there are clear references to 'Lysistrata's original performance context in the Script A response, there is less of a sense of engaging with the specific demands of the question and, particularly, the word 'relevant'. The response reads more like a prepared answer at times with the examples used from the opoc not entirely embedded in a way that would take it into Level 4. The 'Doctor Faustus' response in Script B, overall, has the most connections made to the play's opoc and references made in order to demonstrate an understanding for a 21st century audience and to make the play relevant. The strength of this response is in the connections made and the intention of some of the ideas. The concept itself, as presented here, lacks strength of purpose when seen against our understanding of Marlowe's original intentions and the candidate's stated aim for the production.

Three Section B responses and three slightly different approaches, all of which have merit and all of which enabled the candidates to earn above average marks for this section in 2012. Examiners are marking what is presented on the page; rather than what might have been there and it must be taken into account that centres will have different approaches to the material in order to prepare candidates for the examination. How candidates present factual information in relation to the proposed concept and the specific demands of the question helps examiners when placing a response into a particular mark band.

Section A is about rehearsal but, more specifically, it is about preparing a rehearsal of the given extract and demonstrating across all three parts of the question an understanding of a director working with a company in order to prepare the text for performance. There is merit in all three responses here, with

examples of approaches that worked for the extracts and the specifics of the question.

Approaches to Section A are explored further in the Examiners' Reports but, overall, it appears to be the case that candidates who are able to access the higher levels of marks in this section do so with a confident approach to rehearsal that is invariably based on practical experience. Note the c) responses to Script A and Script B, for example. Both of these responses earned the same mark – but for different reasons with Script A clearly having the potential for Level 3 because of the connections made in the techniques within an overarching intention as stated in the opening paragraph. At this level of study it is not sufficient to simply pluck techniques out of the ether – or the prepared script – if they are not appropriate for the specific demands of the extract and the question.

None of the three Section A responses here specifically connect to the performance as explored in Section B. Whilst there is nothing in the specification to say that Section A must connect to Section B, there is nothing to say that it must not either. A lot will depend on the centre and the approach taken to preparing for the unit. In some cases, for example, a highly-physical interpretation of 'Woyzeck' as explored in Section B might be supported in the candidate's Section A response with rehearsal methods/techniques/strategies that are related to the performance concept. If this approach assists the candidates in making the right connections then there is nothing to say that they cannot do this. It should be noted, however, that the focus of each section is clearly defined in the specification and any reference to rehearsal, for example, in Section B will not earn marks for the candidate.