



GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2010 Drama solo performance examination contained 10 prescribed structures, which provided a wide selection of characters for students to develop from a diverse range of stimuli.

Students who were successful:

- ensured dramatic action far outweighed talking
- made substantial and appropriate reference to the stimulus material
- extensively researched and tightly edited their work
- ensured that the prescribed character occupied the majority of the performance time
- made creative choices in their use of stagecraft
- fully addressed the requirements of the prescribed structure.

Weaker work was characterised by:

- too much talking and a lack of dramatic action
- poor or no use of stagecraft
- little or no reference to the stem in the performance focus
- omission of parts of the dot points
- a lack of research and/or little or no reference to the stimulus material
- a naturalistic performance style.

It is critical for teachers and students to note that if **any** part of the prescribed structure is omitted, students **cannot** score full marks for criterion 1. If students do not score full marks for criterion 1, they cannot score full marks for any other criterion. Analysis of the structure should be part of initial planning for the performance and, as the performance is developed, edited and refined, care should be taken that the requirements of each criterion are being met in obvious and dramatically appropriate ways.

Students need to be reminded that, in addition to the two prescribed theatrical conventions listed with each prescribed structure, the following four theatrical conventions **must** be demonstrated throughout their performance:

- disjointed time sequences
- transformation of character
- transformation of place
- transformation of object.

It is important to remember that the use of these conventions should enhance the dramatic meaning of the performance. They should not merely be included because they are prescribed. This is particularly noteworthy with respect to the choice of object and the ease with which it can be transformed. Students need to find an object that is appropriate for their character.

Dramatic action should happen without a commentary. There is no need to describe what is happening. Students need to find dramatic, **non-verbal** solutions to providing information.

The more successful work was characterised by a richness of detail obtained through obvious research. Students need to generate a sufficient amount of raw material as they prepare for their solo performance so that they can edit and shape it into up to seven minutes of effective dramatic action. Careful editing helps to avoid repetition. It also helps with pacing the performance and creating dramatic tension, which is assessed in criterion 8.

The choice of costume should also be considered carefully as the wrong choice has the potential to undermine belief in the character(s) being performed. Teachers and students need to note that 'theatre blacks', on their own, are not necessarily the best option. Efficient costume change can be achieved with selective use of items that enhance meaning through their symbolic value.



Students should **not**:

- wear street clothes, school uniforms or T-shirts turned inside out, unless this choice is specifically appropriate for the character(s) they are performing
- wear jewellery or make-up that is inappropriate for the character(s) they are performing
- expose flesh unnecessarily.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The characters

Mrs Lovett

The best work:

- created a strong sense of the macabre
- skilfully used heightened language to reference the Victorian era
- demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of melodrama
- made excellent use of stagecraft, which strongly enhanced the performance
- cleverly integrated the idea of the ‘penny dreadful’.

Weaker work:

- contained little or no sense of melodrama
- made poor choices with language
- failed to understand the nature of the ‘penny dreadful’ or to create an appropriate connection to it
- was characterised by an inappropriate use of alternative source materials; for example, film and music, rather than the prescribed website.

The Valet

The best work:

- made highly effective use of caricature and farce
- successfully explored the subtleties of the idiosyncratic class system
- skilfully used voice and heightened language
- demonstrated clever and innovative manipulation of the idle rich
- presented layers of symbolism within the performance.

Weaker work:

- avoided using the stimulus, choosing to create an example of ingenious saving not found in the prescribed text
- made clumsy use of stagecraft, which strongly detracted from the performance
- failed to identify or explore idiosyncrasies that typify the British upper class
- struggled to make any connection to another fictional valet.

The Hollywood Gossip Columnist

The best work:

- contained text that was rich with appropriate language and satire
- skilfully established the different personalities through voice and gesture
- used stagecraft well, especially costume and props, to assist with transformations
- cleverly integrated the ‘montage of images’ exploring the idea of celebrity
- was particularly inventive with the vision of the ‘double-edged sword’.

Weaker work:

- was unable to differentiate between characters
- presented inappropriate references to popular culture rather than demonstrating an understanding of the times in which Louella and Hedda lived
- contained poor use of stagecraft
- had no sense of the relationship between paparazzi and celebrities.

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The Heroine

The best work:

- presented the primary character, Miep, with empathy and depth
- cleverly used stillness and silence (at the same time, as is required but rarely done) to create dramatic tension
- contained highly effective use of symbol
- demonstrated a strong understanding of and skill with pathos
- was highly physical, demonstrating excellent performance energy.

Weaker work:

- showed little or no understanding of the history or the world of the characters
- presented an interpretation of the story that was very like a television soap
- contained poor use of stagecraft
- struggled to connect Miep to an individual or organisation offering aid to people after 1997.

James O'Neil Mayne

The best work:

- was highly physical demonstrating excellent performance energy, clearly focusing on James
- presented a strong sense of the era and the 'tainted' money
- skilfully worked with the convention of flashback, providing additional information about the character that would have been otherwise unknown
- used pathos effectively to convey James's vulnerabilities
- clearly understood and conveyed the nature of philanthropy.

Weaker work:

- focused on Patrick's actions rather than James's
- failed to understand the difference between flashback and disjointed time sequences
- lacked any sense of developed characters
- failed to address the complexities of 'tainted' money benefiting the community in the twenty-first century.

The Australian Mermaid

The best work:

- resonated with imaginative and appropriate references to the 1940s
- contained excellent research, especially into the social implications
- made great use of sophisticated stagecraft
- skilfully demonstrated the conventions of exaggerated movement and song
- effectively integrated the comparisons with the other women considered to be ahead of their time.

Weaker work:

- struggled to find a way of comparing Kellerman with Pankhurst or Earhart
- focused on swimming rather than her broader performance career
- showed little evidence of the prescribed conventions and elements
- made poor choices with costume.

Fleance

The best work:

- successfully used the conventions of Elizabethan Theatre, particularly heightened language
- demonstrated highly effective and imaginative use of humour
- selectively and appropriately referenced Shakespeare's *Macbeth*
- understood and made clear the complexities of the link between Fleance and Mary, Queen of Scots
- played intelligently and creatively with the nature of 'vaulting ambition' and a twentieth century head of state.

Weaker work:

- contained limited historical research and little sense of the primary character
- struggled with the nature of Elizabethan Theatre, often resorting to using inappropriate amounts of Shakespeare's text
- demonstrated poor use of space and limited application of focus
- failed to understand or dramatically explore the notion of 'vaulting ambition'.



The Performer

The best work:

- skilfully used musical theatre conventions to explore environmental issues
- contained sophisticated exploration of satire
- introduced strongly physical characters, often working with a well-timed soundtrack
- was very inventive with the use of climax and symbol
- clearly understood and demonstrated the tension inherent in the 'Global Warming Tango'.

Weaker work:

- was characterised by poor choice and use of props
- demonstrated little or no knowledge of Bob Fosse's style of choreography
- tended to inappropriately use popular Broadway songs with rewritten lyrics
- contained little or no understanding of the conventions of musical theatre.

Eva Peron

The best work:

- contained strong performance focus and strong performance energy
- presented excellent character transformations and was very physical
- demonstrated innovative and highly effective use of symbol
- clearly explored the complexity of Eva's relationship with the military
- presented an appropriate and dramatically powerful comparison with a future female political figure.

Weaker work:

- contained no sense of Eva's colourful background or any historical context
- overemphasised costume, make-up and accent, often to the detriment of clarity and meaning
- failed to demonstrate stillness and silence, and/or climax
- inappropriately presented a Madonna-inspired, television soap-like character.

The Family Car

The best work:

- effectively referenced the stimulus by establishing the placement of the family in the car, as well as recreating the facial expressions, and clearly adopted Brack's colour palette
- strongly used the conventions of physical theatre, employing highly controlled performance energy
- contained an excellent application of caricature and sound, often incorporating effective comedic choices
- found imaginative ways of transforming between human and machine, using sophisticated transition techniques
- used highly appropriate stagecraft choices.

Weaker work:

- contained little or no reference to the stimulus and showed little evidence of research
- tended to portray people rather than 'The Family Car'
- presented a largely naturalistic performance style
- failed to present the 'vision' required in the final dot point.