

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Theatre Studies stagecraft examination was sat for the first time in 2014. The examination comprised 13 monologue choices covering a range of theatrical styles and genres. Students chose one monologue from the prescribed list. The prescribed list contained new choices as well as monologues from previous years. In 2014, some monologues were reproduced in their entirety, while others were formed by cutting and pasting passages to form the monologues, thus allowing students to address the challenge of shifts in time, persons and places that this requires.

The most significant difference between the new stagecraft examination and the previous monologue examination (up to 2013) is that from 2014 students can choose to interpret their chosen monologue either through Acting and Direction **or** Design (any two of costume, set pieces, properties, sound, make-up).

The VCAA sets a single prescribed version of each monologue for this examination. This is the only version of the monologue that is examinable. Upon request, a PDF of the complete set of prescribed monologues can be sent to schools. Details of how to make this request are on the examination paper. Additionally, the examination paper gives instructions as to which lines are to be included and omitted from the interpretation of the prescribed monologue. The interpretation of deleted passages is not examinable.

The stagecraft examination requires students to think creatively, expressively, imaginatively and theatrically. There are specific requirements for interpreting the monologue using Acting and Direction **or** Design. The specifications are different for each. Students are advised to become familiar with and adhere to these specifications. Students should also be guided by the 'Guidelines for students and teachers', as printed on the examination paper, and should note that the content of the guidelines may change from year to year.

Re-contextualisation of the monologue (that is, changing details such as the original time and/or setting to another context) is permissible for this task. However, any re-contextualisation of the monologue should take into account the scene in which the monologue is embedded and the greater world of the play.

The student being examined is solely responsible for bringing all items in and out of the examination room without assistance, and this should occur within the allotted time. Students should be aware that venues are hired spaces and, therefore, the furniture supplied is not to be stood upon. Under no circumstances should the furniture or the floor be damaged. The examination room contains two chairs for the student to use, should they wish to do so. When in doubt, or if there are particular requirements, students should bring their own furniture. The assessors' table(s) is for assessment purposes only. Students are not to place objects on the assessors' table(s) or use the table(s) in any way during their examination. It should be noted that students are allocated an examination room. Students and teachers are not permitted to request a change of room.

The examination paper contains information regarding objects and substances that students are not permitted to bring into the examination room. The use of breaking glass, stage blood, other liquids or anything that may damage carpet or furniture is often not necessary, can be hazardous and is generally not advised. Liquids are not forbidden, but there is a high expectation that the use of liquids will be limited, highly controlled and very well rehearsed. Students must not use any objects or substances that may cause injury to themselves or others.

Each examination room has a single power point for the use of electrical equipment, such as audio devices. However, it is the responsibility of the student to plan for the use of such equipment beforehand, including considering whether to bring batteries and/or an extension cord. Students are also advised to check the sound level of audio equipment and, if applicable, to be familiar with the remote control devices for the equipment. All equipment should be tested and tagged, including extension cords. Students may bring a laptop, MP3 player, tablet or other such portable electronic device into the examination room. Recording functions on audio equipment must be disabled during the examination.

Areas of strength and weakness (for both Acting and Direction or Design options)

Strong responses were generally characterised by:

- thorough knowledge of the monologue, associated scene and the play as a whole
- a high level of direct research (for example, researching the play or playwright) or indirect research (for example, researching associated themes or ideas)
- a strong and consistent vision for the interpretation

- a strong correlation between the interpretation of the monologue and its context(s), including those within the scene and the greater play
- a high level of understanding of subtext and the intended meaning of the playwright
- consistent and creative application of theatrical style(s)
- high-level use of theatrical terminology and expressions
- a strong level of awareness of the relationship between stagecraft, including acting, and audience.

Weak responses were generally characterised by:

- a very limited knowledge of the monologue, associated scene and the play as a whole
- little evidence of direct research (for example, researching the play or playwright) or indirect research (for example, researching associated themes or ideas)
- a lack of a cohesive vision for the interpretation
- little or no correlation between the interpretation of the monologue and its context(s), including those within the scene and the greater play
- little evidence of understanding of subtext and/or the intended meanings of the playwright
- little evidence or application of theatrical style(s)
- limited use of theatrical terminology and expressions
- limited awareness of the relationship between stagecraft, including acting, and audience.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding errors resulting in a total less than 100 per cent.

Students should note that all of the assessment criteria have equal weighting and so they should ensure their interpretation meets the requirements of each criterion.

The first assessment criterion is quantitative rather than qualitative – it assesses whether the student met the requirements of the task, rather than considering how well the monologue was interpreted. Where students did not meet the requirements of criterion 1, it appeared that, in most cases, memorisation of lines (for Acting and Direction) and contextual choices (for either Acting and Direction or Design) were the primary contributing factors. To achieve full marks for criterion 1, students must adhere to the requirements of the stagecraft area (Acting and Direction or Design), as outlined in the VCE Theatre Studies stagecraft examination specifications.

The examination is divided into three stages: Framing Statement, interpretation and question(s). In 2014, it appeared that most students were prepared for these three stages. The duration of the response to the first two stages, the Framing Statement and the interpretation, was 7 minutes, with a recommended maximum of 2 minutes for the Framing Statement and 5 minutes for the interpretation. Students were each asked one question following their interpretation of the monologue. Students had 2 minutes to answer the question from the point at which they began their response. In future examinations, more than one question may be asked.

Stage 1: Framing Statement

The examination began with students delivering an oral Framing Statement. They were permitted to read from notes written on the Framing Statement form, which was part of the examination paper and which they were allowed to bring into the examination room. Following the oral presentation, a hard copy of the Framing Statement was handed to the assessors before the question(s) stage. Some students brought multiple copies of the Framing Statement into the examination. This was not required; only one copy is required.

It is not a requirement that students memorise the content of the Framing Statement; however, this is an option. Some students wrote lengthy Framing Statements, which they struggled to deliver within 2 minutes. Students should be mindful that the assessors base their assessment on what is **said**, not what is written on the form. It is advisable not to rush the delivery of the oral Framing Statement.

Transition between Framing Statement and interpretation

Students should note that it is their responsibility to move from the Framing Statement (stage 1) to the interpretation (stage 2) and that the transition time is part of the 7 minutes permitted for stages 1 and 2 combined.

Stage 2: Interpretation

Most students followed the examination specifications with regard to the interpretation stage of the examination. However, there were some aspects that caused difficulty for some students. In preparing for stage 2, students should note the following:

- Design
 - According to the specifications, students are to design for ‘a single clearly lit, relatively small space where no changes to the lighting grid are permitted’. Students should take note of this parameter and any further advice with regard to the space, which may appear on the examination paper.
 - Design students must be aware that the primary focus for the design is the prescribed monologue rather than the play as a whole. Reference to the greater world of the play is permitted as long as it adds meaning to the design for the monologue component.
 - Where a prescribed monologue comprises two (or more) passages from different sections of a playscript, students should clearly address **both** passages in their design (for example, the ‘Ariel’ monologue in 2014).
 - Students may make reference to how their design could look under theatrical lighting; however, lighting is not an area of stagecraft for this examination.
 - Students are **not** permitted to read from notes of any kind during the interpretation (stage 2). On the 2014 examination paper, it stated that ‘in the interpretation stage ... reading from notes ... is **not** permitted’. In the examination specifications, it is stated that ‘Speaker’s notes, other than those on the Framing Statement, are not permitted’.
 - The designs and materials the student brings into the examination room need to be well chosen. Students should consider what each design item adds to the overall design concept or vision. Students are advised to avoid unnecessary repetition or duplication of design items.
 - Students must be aware that annotations are not permitted on designs as per examination specifications.
- Acting and Direction
 - It should be noted that it is not within the conventions of this task to add any lines of dialogue to the performance, nor should lines be deleted from the prescribed text as specified on the examination paper or substituted with other lines.
 - Overwhelmingly, students wore a costume and used props for their interpretation. Some also used a well-chosen set item(s), wore make-up and/or used sound effects/music. The application of costume, make-up, sound, properties and set items was viewed with regard to how it related to acting and direction. However, given that the main focus of the assessment is on acting and direction, students should make judicious choices as to the use of other stagecraft and consider its use in light of how it enhances the realisation of their acting and directorial vision.
 - Some students tended to concentrate more on their acting performance and less on their direction of the monologue. Students should note that their application of direction is being assessed as well as their acting, with each component having equal weighting.
 - It should be noted that students will not be prompted during the interpretation (stage 2).

Stage 3: Question(s)

It should be noted that the examination specifications state that one or more question(s) will be asked. In 2014, each student was asked one question selected by the assessor(s) from a set of four. They were required to answer the question verbally. The questions were not published, but were consistent with advice in the specifications.

Students should note the following:

- They may ask for the question(s) to be repeated by the assessor(s) should this be necessary.
- They have up to 2 minutes to answer the question verbally from the point at which they begin to answer.
- They should avoid repeating information previously given; for example, anything stated in the Framing Statement.

The 2014 monologues

The popularity of each monologue is indicated in the table below.

Number	Monologue chosen	Acting and Direction (% of students)	Design (% of students)	Total (% of students)
1	Linda	94.2	5.8	7.2
2	Reggie Fluty	92.2	7.8	13.2
3	Siobhan (and Judy)	83.9	16.1	8.3
4	Lettice	94.5	5.6	9.4
5	Millie	89.8	10.2	7.1
6	Willy	94.7	5.3	7.8
7	Rasid	84.2	15.8	3.9
8	Pa Ubu	83.3	16.7	4.9
9	Dinsky	96.3	3.4	8.3
10	Tramp	84.3	15.7	8.5
11	Slave	89.6	10.4	5.9
12	Ariel	75.2	24.8	9.1
13	Prologue	86.9	13.1	6.3

Characteristics of high-scoring responses

Acting and Direction

High-level Acting and Direction interpretations were characterised by:

- Stage 1: Framing Statement
 - delivery of a Framing Statement that clearly established the main acting and directorial choices made, the contexts of the interpretation, evidence of research, and knowledge of the monologue, scene and wider world of the play
- Stage 2: Interpretation
 - re-contextualisation, if applied, was appropriate to the scene and the wider play
 - effective mastering of the language of the monologue
 - an interpretation that conveyed a strong understanding of the intended meaning and context(s) of the play
 - evidence of high-level research
 - effective use of the theatrical style(s) of the prescribed monologue, scene and play
 - well-conceived and well-executed interpretative choices
 - highly effective use of the actor–audience relationship
 - strong and cohesive directorial vision
 - a strong sense of the character’s role and function in the monologue and the wider play
 - a clear awareness of implied time, place and person(s)
 - the ability to convey implied person and implied place very effectively
 - accomplished performance skills, including the use of expressive skills, verbal and non-verbal language
 - well-chosen and effectively applied other stagecraft to enhance the acting and direction
 - highly evident and effective use of focus and space
 - an understanding of, and an ability to manipulate, theatrical tension and timing
 - highly effective pace and rhythm of delivery
 - evidence of high-level directorial choices and the execution of them
- Stage 3: Question(s)
 - understanding of the monologue and of the application of acting and direction not previously shown
 - consistency with the content and intentions of stages 1 and 2.

Design

High-level Design interpretations were characterised by:

- Stage 1: Framing Statement
 - delivery of a Framing Statement that clearly established the main design choices made (for any two of costume, set pieces, properties, sound, make-up), the context of the interpretation, evidence of research and knowledge of the monologue, scene and wider world of the play
- Stage 2: Interpretation

- appropriate re-contextualisation of the scene and the wider play, if applied
- effective use of well-chosen direct quotations from the prescribed monologue
- a strong understanding of the intended meaning and context(s) of the play
- evidence of high-level research
- effective use of and/or reference to the theatrical style(s) of the prescribed monologue, scene and play
- well-conceived and well-executed design choices
- a high level of understanding of the interrelationship between designer, actor and audience
- strong and cohesive design vision
- a strong sense of the function of the monologue in relation to the wider play
- accomplished design skills
- evidence of an awareness of the acting of the monologue in regard to the design
- evidence of high-level design choices and the execution of them
- high-level design presentation skills
- Stage 3: Question(s)
 - understanding of the monologue and of the application of design not previously shown
 - consistency with the content and intentions of stages 1 and 2.