

2016 VCE Theatre Studies stagecraft examination report

General comments

In 2016, the Theatre Studies Stagecraft examination comprised 13 monologue choices covering a range of theatrical styles, genres, forms and cultural origins. There were six female character monologue choices, five male character monologue choices and two neutral (male or female) character monologue choices. Students chose one monologue from the prescribed list. In 2016, 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. Students could choose to interpret their chosen monologue using either Acting and Direction or Design (any two of costume, set, properties, sound, make-up). In 2016, 13% of students chose the Design option.

The stagecraft examination requires students to think creatively, expressively, imaginatively and theatrically. There are specific requirements for interpreting the monologue whether the student chooses to use 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 follow the 'Guidelines for students and teachers', as printed on the examination paper, and note that the content of the guidelines may change from year to year.

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 of dialogue are to be included and omitted from the interpretation of the prescribed monologue. The interpretation of deleted passages is not examinable. Unless otherwise indicated, students can choose to apply the stage directions, ignore them or create their own.

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 playscript as a whole.

Students should be aware that the rooms used for stagecraft examinations are not necessarily theatrical performance spaces and that their dimensions may vary. It should be noted that students are allocated an examination room. Students and teachers are not permitted to request a change of room. Students should plan for their interpretation to be flexible enough for a variety of room sizes, lighting conditions and floor coverings. 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. No table is supplied. When in doubt, or if there are particular requirements, students should bring their own furniture. Students should note that their total time in the examination room **must not exceed** 12 minutes and that this will be monitored. It is advised that students make judicious decisions about the materials/items they bring into, and set

up in, the room. Students should take no more than two minutes to set up before commencing stage 1 of their examination. Failure to do so may result in the student not having sufficient time to complete all three stages of the exam. 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.

The examination paper contains information regarding objects and substances that students are not permitted to use and this is strongly enforced. The use of breaking glass, stage blood, other liquids or anything that may damage the flooring/floor covering 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 student's responsibility 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. Where a laptop is used, the student should direct the screen of the device towards the assessors. A mobile phone is permitted in the examination room if it is to be used as a prop or as an audio device. However, the phone function must be disabled before entering the room.

For students choosing the Acting and Direction option:

- Students should ensure that, as well as acting, they demonstrate their application of **direction** to interpret the monologue; both are assessed.
- Overwhelmingly, in 2016, students used **other stagecraft** (for example, make-up, costume, set pieces, properties, sound) to support their acting and direction. The application of other stagecraft was viewed with regard to how it enhanced the student's acting and how it related to their directorial vision, the context(s) of the monologue and the theatrical style(s) applied to the interpretation.

For students choosing the Design option:

- The examination specifications provide advice regarding the labelling of the designs, including the maximum number of labels permitted. Annotations are **not** permitted on the designs.
- 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'. Designing for a large theatre space is outside the specifications of this task.
- 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.
- The design is for a performance of the monologue as if by a **single actor** performing the character who delivers the monologue. It is **not** necessary to design for subsidiary characters.

| Qualities of work presented by high-performing students | Characterised by |
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| a sophisticated interpretation of the monologue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a thorough knowledge of the monologue, the associated scene and the whole playscript, with evidence that the student had applied ideas in their interpretation based on findings from extensive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – direct research; for example, researching the play or playwright – indirect research; for example, researching associated times, settings, themes or ideas • a strong and clearly articulated/demonstrated directorial/design 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the context chosen by the student being clear, appropriate and articulated consistently across the Framing Statement, performance/presentation and responses to question(s) |
| a high-level understanding of the intended meanings of the playwright | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a thorough, detailed and well-considered application of stagecraft, directorial or design choices |
| strong understanding and application of theatrical style(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a high level of skill in the application of the theatrical style(s), consistently demonstrated across the three stages of the examination through directorial/design choices and the way that ideas gleaned from research were realised in the performance/presentation |
| clearly evident application of directorial/design decisions in the performance/presentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ideas and choices demonstrated in the performance/presentation being highly consistent with the interpretation outlined in the Framing Statement |
| high-level use of theatrical terminology and expressions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistent and sophisticated use of theatrical terminology and expressions across all three stages of the examination |
| a strong awareness of the relationship between stagecraft and the audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for Acting/Direction students, creation and maintenance of a sophisticated and effective interrelationship between acting, direction and design; for example, through directorial choices such as blocking, movement, use of performance and expressive skills, and choices relating to how costume, make-up, props, set pieces and/or sound were used to enhance their interpretation of the monologue in performance • for Design students, explanations in their presentation of how their design choices would enable the actor to create and maintain sophisticated and effective interrelationships between acting, direction, design and audience. For example, references to qualities of materials such as weight or flow, the shape, height or placement of set pieces, manipulation of props, intended effect/impact of make-up techniques or colours, textures etc. |

Specific information

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

The first assessment criterion is quantitative rather than qualitative – it assesses whether the student has met the requirements of the task, rather than considering how well the monologue was interpreted. To achieve full marks for criterion 1, students needed to adhere to the requirements of the stagecraft area (Acting and Direction or Design), as outlined in the VCE Theatre Studies Stagecraft examination specifications and on the examination paper. Where students did not meet the requirements of criterion 1, in most cases memorisation of lines (for Acting and Direction) and not quoting specific lines from the monologue (for Design) were the primary contributing factors. Additionally, some Design students did not make a clear enough distinction between their responses to stage 1 and stage 2 of the examination.

The examination is divided into three stages – stage 1: Framing Statement, stage 2: Interpretation and stage 3: Question(s). The duration of stages 1 and 2 was 7 minutes, with students taking up to 2 minutes for stage 1 and up to 5 minutes for stage 2. The duration of stage 3 was no more than two minutes. In 2016, most students were prepared for these three stages; however, a small number of students seemed less prepared for stage 3 and/or tended to repeat information provided in stages 1 and 2 when answering the question. The student's responses to all three stages contributed to their score for the examination. Students should be mindful to provide **consistent** information across the three stages of the examination.

Stage 1: Framing Statement

The examination began with students delivering an oral Framing Statement. They were permitted to read from notes written on or attached to 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. Some students brought multiple copies of the Framing Statement proforma into the examination, but only one copy is required.

Students should be mindful that assessors base their assessment on what is **said**, not what is written on the form. 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 take no longer than 2 minutes for stage 1 of the examination.

Students should concentrate on discussing key artistic and other choices and the reason(s) for them, rather than retelling the story of the play. Design students should be mindful to avoid repeating information they have provided in the Framing Statement when delivering the interpretation (stage 2).

Transition between Framing Statement and Interpretation

Students should start their interpretation (stage 2) as soon as possible after delivering the oral Framing Statement. 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. A small number of Design students read from notes when delivering their interpretation, but this was outside the specifications of the task. On the 2016 examination paper, it stated that 'In the interpretation stage ... reading from notes ... is **not** permitted'.

In preparing for stage 2, students should ensure that:

- a clear distinction is made between the completion of their oral Framing Statement (stage 1) and the commencement of their interpretation (stage 2)
- their interpretation (stage 2) contains all of the required elements as contained in the specifications document for this examination.

Students should also note that:

- as specified on the 2016 examination paper, unless otherwise stated, students may use the stage directions contained in the prescribed text or use them as a guide
- where a prescribed monologue comprises two (or more) passages from different sections of a playscript, students should ensure that their interpretation contains (or responds to, if they choose the Design option) all of the prescribed text
- the materials the student brings into the examination room need to be well chosen. Students should consider what each item adds to the overall concept or vision of their interpretation.

Stage 3: Question(s)

The examination specifications state that one or more question(s) will be asked in stage 3. In 2016, 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 given in the specifications.

Students should note the following:

- They are not to refer to notes or other materials when answering the question(s).
- The answer(s) they provide should be **consistent** with their response to stages 1 and 2 of the examination.
- 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(s) 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 examination specifications document contains examples of the types of questions that could be used in the question(s) stage of the examination.

The 2016 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 | Diana Morales | 12.5 | 3.0 | 11.3 |
| 2 | Thomasina | 7.1 | 5.3 | 6.8 |
| 3 | Margaret | 3.9 | 3.0 | 3.8 |
| 4 | Madame Arcati | 12.1 | 13.5 | 12.3 |
| 5 | Sylvia | 12.1 | 7.5 | 11.5 |
| 6 | Titania | 5.7 | 21.8 | 7.8 |
| 7 | Man | 11.2 | 9.8 | 11.0 |
| 8 | Bernard | 2.7 | 1.5 | 2.6 |
| 9 | Horrocks | 8.8 | 10.5 | 9.0 |
| 10 | Phaeton | 9.1 | 6.0 | 8.7 |
| 11 | Oberon | 4.0 | 5.3 | 4.2 |
| 12 | Melon Thief | 4.8 | 5.3 | 4.9 |
| 13 | Tiresias | 6.0 | 7.5 | 6.2 |

Characteristics of high-scoring responses (for both Acting and Direction, and Design options)

Stage 1: Framing Statement

- delivery of a Framing Statement that clearly established the main (acting and directorial **or** design) choices made, the contexts of the interpretation, evidence of research outside of the playscript and how it was applied, and knowledge of the monologue, scene and wider playscript
- information was clearly and concisely delivered
- content that was highly consistent with that of the interpretation (stage 2)
- the transition into stage 2 was clearly signposted and well executed

Stage 2: Interpretation

- the interpretation was highly consistent with the content of the Framing Statement (stage 1)
- the interpretation conveyed a strong understanding of the intended meaning(s) and context(s) of the play
- evidence that high-level research both within and outside of the playscript had been conducted and applied to the interpretation
- strongly conveyed/referenced theatrical style(s)
- strong, cohesive and clearly evident directorial **or** design vision
- well-conceived and well-executed directorial and acting **or** design choices
- re-contextualisation, if applied, was appropriate to the monologue as well as the associated scene and the wider playscript
- a high level of understanding of the interrelationships between the selected area of stagecraft (Acting and Direction **or** Design), the actor and the audience
- strong sense of the character's(s') role and function in the monologue and the wider play
- judiciously chosen, and effectively applied, materials to enhance the selected stagecraft (Acting and Direction **or** Design)

Stage 3: Question(s)

- a high level of connection with all facets of the question(s)
- highly effective use of theatrical terminology and expressions
- a high level of consistency with the responses to stages 1 and 2