

2018 VCE Theatre Studies Stagecraft examination report

General comments

The Theatre Studies Stagecraft examination (its preparation and execution) required students to think analytically, imaginatively and creatively. For example, students were required to select a monologue and analyse its content, themes, images, ideas and intended meanings informed by their understanding of the scene(s) from which the monologue is derived as well as the whole playscript. Students created an interpretation of the monologue **either** through Acting and Direction **or** Design. In doing so they used their imagination and creativity to arrive at their own interpretation of the monologue informed by their understanding of the intended meanings of the text, including those of the playwright, and research they conduct from both within and outside of the playscript.

There were specific requirements for interpreting the monologue whether the student chose to use Acting and Direction or Design. The specifications were different for each option. 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, 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 monologue texts can be sent to schools. Details of how to make this request are on the examination. Additionally, the examination gives instructions as to which lines of dialogue are to be included and which are to be omitted from the interpretation of the prescribed monologue. The interpretation of deleted passages/lines is not examinable.

It should be noted that the 2018 examination was the last one for this study design.

In 2018, the Theatre Studies stagecraft examination comprised 14 monologue choices covering a range of theatrical styles, forms, contexts, themes and cultural origins. There were six female character monologue choices, six male character monologue choices and two neutral character monologue choices. Students chose one monologue from the prescribed list. In 2018, some monologues were reproduced in their entirety (as they appear in the original playscript), while others were formed by cutting and pasting passages from one or more parts of the playscript to form the monologue, 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 2018, 15% of students chose the Design option. In 2018 a camera was used to record each student's examination (all three stages) without incident. However, some students appeared to present to the camera, or move their presentation close to it, which was not stipulated or required.

Unless otherwise indicated, students can choose to apply the published stage directions, ignore them or create and apply their own. If a student chooses to sing the song lyrics contained within a monologue, the melody must be consistent with the published score of the music. Any published version of the score is acceptable. Re-contextualisation of the monologue (that is, changing details such as the time, given circumstances and/or setting of the original playscript) is permissible for

this task. However, any re-contextualisation decisions for the monologue should also be appropriate for the scene in which the monologue is embedded and the playscript as a whole, including its intended meanings. Students may also change the theatrical style(s) of the monologue and, if so, the same considerations (above) should apply.

Students should be aware that the rooms used for the examination are not necessarily dedicated theatre performance spaces and that their dimensions, acoustics and lighting conditions may vary. Students should plan for their interpretation to be flexible enough for a variety of room sizes, acoustics, lighting conditions and floor coverings. 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 room contains two chairs for the student to use, should they wish to do so. 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. When in doubt, or if there are particular requirements, students should bring their own furniture and associated materials. However, as with any other props or set items, students and teachers should be aware that some venues have standard-sized doors/doorways and that items need to fit through this opening (height and width). The assessors' table(s) in the examination room 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. Students must not use any objects or substances that may cause injury to themselves or others, or that may damage the examination room. Students should also see the 'Guidelines for students and teachers' for further information about this.

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 use batteries and/or the power supply in the room. Students are also advised during their set-up to check the sound level of audio equipment and, if applicable, to be familiar with the remote-control devices for the equipment. All electrical equipment should be tested and tagged, including extension cords. Students may bring a laptop, MP3 player, mobile phone, tablet or other such portable electronic device into the examination room. Recording functions on any electronic devices/equipment must be disabled during the examination. Where a laptop is used, the student should direct the screen of the device towards the assessors. Students are not permitted to access the internet during the examination. A mobile phone or other smart device such as a tablet is permitted in the examination room if it is to be used as a prop or as an audio-video replay device. However, the phone, messaging and wi-fi functions must be disabled **before** the student enters the room.

Students should note that it is stipulated on the examination that they have a maximum of two minutes to set up their materials before commencing the examination. If a student is still setting up at the two-minute mark they will be asked to commence their examination, because failure to do so may result in the student not having sufficient time to complete all stages of the examination. It is advised that students make judicious decisions about the materials/items they bring into, and set up in, the room.

Students are required to hand a hard copy of their Framing Statement to the assessors after delivering their oral framing statement. Only one copy is required.

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.
- While an accent is not obligatory, in 2018 many students used one. Students should also be mindful of the pronunciation of place names, the names of other characters and so on contained within the monologue.
- It is a requirement of the examination that students convey a theatrical style(s) and that it is **consistently** applied throughout their performance.

- Students will **not** be prompted. If a student forgets their lines, they should pick up the monologue where they can and continue with their performance.

For students choosing the Design option:

- According to the specifications, students are to design for ‘a single clearly lit space. 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 scene or the play as a whole. Reference to the scene and 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(s) who delivers the monologue. The focus is on **how** the actor would utilise the elements/materials the student has designed. It is **not** necessary to design for other characters in the monologue, scene or play.
- In 2018 some students made the assumption that an audience member would understand the inherent meanings behind their design choices. Design students should be mindful that any symbolic intentions conveyed in their designs should be clearly evident to, and would be understood by, an audience watching the performance.

Qualities of work presented by high-performing students	Characterised by
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 contexts of the play or the playwright – indirect research, for example, researching associated times, settings, themes or ideas • a strong and clearly articulated/demonstrated directorial/design concept 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"> • well-considered application of stagecraft, directorial or design choices that is informed by the intentions of the playwright/the intended meanings of the playscript
strong understanding and application of theatrical style(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a high level of skill in the choice and application of the theatrical style(s), consistently demonstrated across the three stages of the examination through directorial/design choices and the way that research into the theatrical style(s) and its conventions has informed the performance/presentation

Qualities of work presented by high-performing students	Characterised by
clearly evident application of acting/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 and addressed in response to the question(s). The decisions take into account aspects such as the themes and subtext of the monologue/play, a sense of audience, use of the space, and the interrelationships between the monologue, the scene and the whole playscript
high-level use of theatrical terminology and expressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consistent and sophisticated use of theatrical terminology and expressions throughout the examination
a strong awareness of the relationship between stagecraft and the audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for Acting and Direction students, creation and maintenance of a sophisticated and effective interrelationship between acting, direction and design, with an awareness of audience. For example, through directorial choices such as blocking, movement, use of performance and expressive skills, and choices relating to stagecraft was 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 colour(s) and texture(s) of costumes, 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 chosen area (Acting and Direction or Design), as outlined in the VCE Theatre Studies performance examination specifications and on the examination. Where students did not meet the requirements of criterion 1, in most cases the contributing factors were, for Acting and Direction: memorisation of lines, contextual choices and theatre style choices, and for Design: not quoting specific lines from the monologue and contextual choices (such as resetting the monologue in a time period that was not appropriate for the play as a whole).

In 2018 the examination was divided into three stages – stage 1: Framing Statement, stage 2: Interpretation and stage 3: Question(s). The student's responses to all three stages contributed to their score for the examination. Students should be mindful to provide consistent information and interpretation ideas across the 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 and which they were allowed to bring into the examination room. Following the oral presentation, a single hard copy of the Framing Statement was handed to the assessors.

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 that some students chose. Students should consider the length of their Framing Statement so that it can be delivered within the allocated time. Students should take no longer than two minutes for stage 1 of the examination. Some students prepared lengthy Framing Statements, which they struggled to deliver within two minutes.

Transition between Framing Statement and Interpretation

Students were required to start their interpretation (stage 2) as soon as possible after delivering the oral Framing Statement. It was the student's responsibility to move from the Framing Statement (stage 1) to the interpretation (stage 2), and the transition time was part of the time 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.

In preparing for stage 2, students should ensure that:

- they make a clear distinction between the completion of their oral Framing Statement and the commencement of their interpretation
- their interpretation contains all of the required elements as contained in the specifications for this examination.

Students should also note that:

- as specified on the 2018 examination, unless otherwise stated, students may adhere to the stage directions contained in the prescribed text or use them as a guide. In 2018 many students created and applied their own stage directions
- 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) all of the prescribed text in each section and they should manage the transition from one piece of text to the other
- 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 and be mindful of the time it will take to bring the materials into the room, set them up and, following the examination, pack them away
- Design students should only bring into the examination room materials directly related to their two chosen design areas (for example, costume and props)
- if at the completion of the allocated time, students are still presenting the interpretation stage of the examination they will be asked to stop.

Stage 3: Question(s)

In 2018, each student was asked **one** question selected by the assessor(s) from a set of five. They were required to answer the question verbally. The questions were not published but were consistent with advice given in the specifications.

- For the 2018 examination, the examination specifications document contained examples of the types of questions that could be used in the question(s) stage of the examination.
- Students were not to refer to notes or other materials when answering the question.
- The student could ask for the question to be repeated by the assessors.

- Students had up to two minutes to answer the question verbally from the point at which they began to answer.
- Most students avoided repeating information previously given, for example, information stated in the Framing Statement.

The 2018 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	Trina	14.6	11.6	14.1
2	Mistress Quickly	4.4	3.4	4.2
3	Aunt Maggie	7.0	2.7	6.4
4	Leah	9.7	12.9	10.2
5	Nora	13.0	8.8	12.4
6	Dhurrumbin	2.8	6.1	3.3
7	Marvin	5.3	2.0	4.8
8	Ford	2.0	0.7	1.8
9	Magennis	3.2	0.7	2.8
10	Ivan/Crocodile	7.0	7.5	7.1
11	Actor	6.3	12.9	7.3
12	Maniac	12.1	6.1	11.2
13	Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Susan Glasson [Figure 1], All	6.0	12.2	7.0
14	Announcer	6.4	12.2	7.3

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

Stage 1: Framing Statement

- delivery of an oral Framing Statement that clearly established the main artistic choices to be communicated through the interpretation
- demonstrable evidence of research from both within and outside of the playscript and how it was applied (analytical thinking), and the interrelationship between the monologue, scene and wider playscript. These choices allow students to demonstrate imagination and creative thinking
- information was clearly and concisely delivered, including using a range of theatrical terminology and expressions
- 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 directorial/design vision articulated in the Framing Statement (stage 1)
- the interpretation conveyed a strong understanding of the intended meaning(s), the plot, themes and context(s) of the play and its structure
- 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, or a change to the theatrical style(s) 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
- a 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 application of the selected stagecraft (Acting and Direction or Design)

Stage 3: Question(s)

- highly effective use of theatrical terminology and expressions
- a high level of consistency with the responses to stages 1 and 2
- the response directly addressed the specific facets of the question
- little or no repetition of information previously given