2024 VCE Theatre Studies monologue external assessment report

General comments

In 2024, the examination was in two stages.

Stage 1 required students to interpret one of the 10 prescribed monologues through the application of acting and directing or through design (applying any two of costume, make-up, set, props, lighting or sound).

Stage 2 was an oral interpretation statement. Students had eight minutes to present both stages of the examination and this was timed. Some monologues were prescribed in their entirety (as they appeared in the original script), while others were formed by cutting and pasting passages from one or more parts of the play script to form the monologue, thus allowing students to address the challenge of shifts in time, persons, places and character development that this task requires.

Students could portray or refer to the gender of their chosen character as per the original, prescribed script or they could change it. Any change to the gender of the character was considered by the assessors to be a contextual choice. Like other choices of this kind, a change of gender needed to be appropriate for the monologue, the scene in which the monologue was embedded, and the full play. In 2024, an example of this was the character ‘Grandson’. While most students portrayed or referred to this character as male, some chose for them to be female or a non-specified gender. Any of these choices were deemed to be permissible.

Criterion 7 pertains to the ‘skill in applying theatre style(s)’. In high-scoring responses, the theatre style(s) the student chose to apply to their interpretation was highly evident in Stage 1 and explained and justified in Stage 2 of the examination. In low-scoring responses, the theatre style(s) was barely evident in Stage 1 and/or not referred to in Stage 2.

In Stage 2 of the examination, students delivered an oral interpretation statement. They were permitted to read from previously prepared notes if necessary. While most students allowed enough time in their total eight-minute examination time to deliver this stage at a reasonable pace, some students rushed, which made their statements potentially difficult to follow. Students should note that for Stage 2 of the examination, it is what is said that is assessed, not what is written on the Interpretation Statement template. Students were required to justify and explain their interpretative decisions. They were also required to complete certain sections of the Interpretation Statement template provided by the VCAA for this examination. Some students did not complete relevant sections of the template, such as whether they had chosen the acting and directing or the designer option, and which two elements of theatre composition were ‘most evident’ in their interpretation. Not completing the section about the two elements of theatre composition on the Interpretation Statement template affected students’ performance in relation to Criterion 1 and Criterion 8. In high-scoring responses, the elements of theatre composition were well-integrated and highly evident throughout the interpretation. In some lower-scoring responses, while the elements of theatre composition were stated, there was little evidence of a particular focus on these in the monologue interpretation.

The examination paper stated that students should ensure that materials could fit through a standard doorframe (height and width). Most students ensured that their materials were of an appropriate size.

Students were given two minutes to set up their materials once they were inside the examination room, and this was timed. Most students ensured that they did not exceed the required time limit. Students who were still setting up at the two-minute mark were asked to commence Stage 1 of the examination. Once students had set up their materials, the assessors explained to them how the examination would be timed.

Students who had a soundtrack to play in their interpretation were permitted to conduct a sound check and/or video check before commencing their examination. Students were permitted to bring a data projector, laptop, a mobile phone, a tablet, a bluetooth speaker or other such portable electronic device into the examination room. A mobile phone or other smart device, such as a tablet, was permitted in the examination room if it was to be used as a prop or as an audio/video playback device (for previously recorded material). For the reproduction of sound, most students used a bluetooth speaker or similar device. Recording functions, messaging and internet access on any electronic devices/equipment had to be disabled before the student entered the room. Where a laptop or other device with a screen was used, the student was required to position the screen so it faced the assessors. Overwhelmingly, electronic equipment used was battery-operated. However, equipment that required electrical power, including extension cords, needed to be tested and tagged prior to use on the day of the examination.

Students were required to present their monologue interpretation in a 5 m × 5 m space, which was set approximately one metre in front of the assessors. Students should be aware that the assessors are watching their interpretation as an audience. Actor/director students may choose to perform to the assessors as the intended audience for the play. Designers were required to design for a solo actor performing the monologue in a 5 m × 5 m space. It was evident that some design students produced set, properties, lighting or sound designs for an acting space larger than the required size. This negatively affected students’ performance on a range of the criteria including Criterion 1, Criterion 3 and Criterion 5.

Students should be aware that the rooms used for the examination are not necessarily dedicated theatre performance spaces and that their dimensions, acoustics, floor coverings, ceiling heights and lighting conditions may vary. Students should plan for their interpretation to be flexible enough for a variety of room sizes, acoustics, lighting conditions, ceiling heights and floor coverings, including carpet. At the completion of their examination, students are to return the room to its original state. This includes any cleaning of the room, including the floor, that may be required.

Specific information

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

All students were examined against each of the following criteria. The criteria were applied to both stages of the examination.

Criterion 1: Fulfilment of the requirements of the selected production role

| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| % | 0.1 | 0 | 0.2 | 0 | 0.3 | 1.5 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 11 | 79 | 9.6 |

This is a compliance criterion assessed in accordance with the examination specifications document. Most students scored highly on this criterion.

The common contributing factors for lower-scoring designing responses included:

* designing for a stage area larger than 5 m × 5 m
* designing for non-prescribed character(s) (e.g. additionally designing costumes for the ‘Players’ that ‘Hamlet’ was talking to in the monologue)
* designing for parts of the play beyond the events in the prescribed monologue
* in Stage 1, not delivering at least two quotes from the monologue.

The common contributing factors for lower-scoring acting and directing responses included:

* not delivering all of the prescribed lines and/or paraphrasing lines
* contextual choices that were not informed by the scene in which the monologue was embedded and/or the wider world of the play.

Criterion 2: Skill in undertaking and applying dramaturgy

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.5 | 3 | 8 | 17 | 23 | 20 | 16 | 8 | 5 | 6.5 |

In both stages of this examination, students were required to demonstrate their skills as a dramaturg, including that they had conducted dramaturgical research in preparing their interpretation.

Higher-scoring responses demonstrated research both within and outside of the play script, with a clear link(s) evident as to how dramaturgy had informed the interpretation. Relevant information had been sourced and applied, evident through specific artistic decisions made in the production role work.

Lower-scoring responses demonstrated little evidence of dramaturgical research outside of the play script and/or showed a disconnect between the dramaturgy conducted and the interpretation. In these responses, evidence of how dramaturgy had been applied was not clearly evident in the interpretation/production role work.

Criterion 3: Skill in working in the selected production role

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.1 | 0 | 0.4 | 2 | 9 | 17 | 23 | 21 | 14 | 8 | 6 | 6.5 |

This criterion assesses the student’s knowledge and skills working in either the production role of director and actor or as a designer in two design production roles (e.g. costume and make-up) as per the examination specifications (VCAA, 2022).

Higher-scoring responses clearly demonstrated various ways of working in the selected roles (acting/directing or two design roles), including conducting dramaturgy, using elements of theatre composition to interpret the monologue, creating an informed context, and conveying a high level of understanding of the intended meanings of the monologue.

Lower-scoring responses demonstrated limited indicators of working in the selected role as outlined in the examination specifications (VCAA, 2022) for the selected production role and/or did not meet all of the requirements.

Criterion 4: Skill in conveying the interrelationships between the prescribed monologue, the specified scene and the world of the play

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.8 | 4 | 10 | 20 | 23 | 19 | 12 | 6 | 5 | 6.2 |

This criterion assesses the student’s ability to convey their knowledge of the interrelationships between the content and contexts of the prescribed monologue, the specified scene in which it is embedded and the wider play script.

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a highly evident demonstration (in Stage 1) and explanation (in Stage 2) of how the content and contexts of the monologue were interconnected with and informed by the prescribed scene and the play script overall. This might have included interpretative decisions that reflected a knowledge of previous scene(s), and the impact of where the monologue sits within the play (e.g. exposition, denouement).

In lower-scoring responses, there was little evidence in one or both stages of the examination of the student’s knowledge of the play script beyond the monologue, or there were tenuous links made or referred to between the monologue, scene and the wider play script.

Criterion 5: Skill in the development of a creative and an imaginative concept for interpreting the prescribed monologue

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.6 | 2 | 9 | 17 | 23 | 20 | 14 | 8 | 7 | 6.5 |

This criterion assesses the student’s ability to develop a creative and imaginative concept for their interpretation informed by the dramaturgy they conducted.

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a creative and imaginative concept that was well-informed, evident and consistent throughout the interpretation (Stage 1) and explained and justified in the oral interpretation statement (Stage 2).

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by an inconsistent or indiscernible overarching creative and imaginative concept for the interpretation. These responses contained little evidence of how the interpretation was informed by dramaturgy, and little to no evidence of an explanation and/or justification of the creative and imaginative concept in the oral interpretation statement (Stage 2).

Criterion 6: Skill in conveying the contexts of the prescribed monologue

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 17 | 24 | 21 | 12 | 8 | 5 | 6.4 |

This criterion assesses the student’s ability to convey the contexts of the prescribed monologue through their work in the selected production role. Students were required to interpret the monologue within its originalcontext(s) or another considered and informedcontext(s). Contextual choices for the monologue were to be informed by the scene in which the monologue was embedded and the wider world of the play.

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a clearly conveyed context(s) that was consistent with that of the original play script or, while being different from the original, was highly applicable for the interpretation.

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by a lack of awareness of the original context(s) of the play and/or the application of a context(s) that was inappropriate for the interpretation or could not be sustained beyond the monologue (i.e. would not be appropriate for an interpretation of the scene or the whole play).

Criterion 7: Skill in applying theatre style(s)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.1 | 0.6 | 2 | 4 | 12 | 18 | 22 | 18 | 12 | 6 | 5 | 6.1 |

This criterion assesses the student’s skill in applying theatre style(s) to the monologue interpretation. Students may interpret the monologue within its original theatre style(s) or another considered and informed theatre style(s).

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a clearly conveyed theatre style(s) that was consistent with that of the original playscript or, if different from the original, was highly applicable for the interpretation. In these responses, conventions of the theatre style(s) were effectively and skilfully applied, and the theatre style(s) was cohesive with the production role interpretive decisions. The application of the theatre style(s) was explained and justified in Stage 2 of the examination.

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by a lack of awareness of the theatre style(s) of the play and/or the application of a theatre style(s) that was inappropriate for the interpretation. In these responses, there was little to no reference to the theatre style(s) in Stage 2 of the examination.

Criterion 8: Skill in the use of elements of theatre composition

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 3 | 12 | 19 | 23 | 18 | 13 | 7 | 4 | 6.2 |

The elements of theatre composition are cohesion, motion, rhythm, emphasis, contrast and variation. The elements can be applied individually or in combination and in any theatre style(s). The choice and application of one or more elements of theatre composition for each production role was to be informed by the concept for the interpretation. When using the elements of theatre composition, students are required to consider the contexts, plot, structure, language of the script, character(s), themes, images and ideas, theatre style(s), intended meanings and theatrical possibilities.

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a highly evident understanding of the element applied to each of the two production roles. The element was used in a highly effective manner to covey the concept the student had created for the interpretation. In these responses, it was highly evident in Stage 1 which elements of theatre composition the student would highlight in their interpretation (as indicated on the Interpretation Statement template).

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by a lack of understanding of the element of theatre composition applied to each of the two production roles and/or by an underdevelopment of the element in the interpretation overall. There was a disconnect between the elements as stated by the student on the Interpretation Statement template and as seen in their interpretation (Stage 1 of the examination).

Criterion 9: Skill in demonstrating the interrelationship between the interpretation and the audience

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.1 | 0 | 0.8 | 3 | 10 | 20 | 23 | 19 | 12 | 7 | 5 | 6.3 |

This criterion assesses the student’s ability to demonstrate how their work in interpreting the prescribed monologue is informed by an understanding of audience culture, and how their interpretation could enhance the experience of the intended audience.

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a clearly identified intended audience and an interpretation that was aimed at enhancing the experience of that audience. These responses included aspects such as sympathy, dramatic tension, catharsis and humour.

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by little or no identification of an intended audience and/or little or no evidence that the interpretation would enhance the experience of an audience.

Criterion 10: Ability to demonstrate, orally justify and explain interpretative decisions

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.1 | 0.8 | 3 | 9 | 17 | 23 | 19 | 14 | 8 | 6 | 6.4 |

This criterion assesses the student’s ability to demonstrate effectively, orally explain and justify their interpretation of the prescribed monologue. This applied to both stages of the examination (Stage 1 – Interpretation and Stage 2 – Interpretation Statement).

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a demonstration, explanation and justification of the interpretative decisions that effectively linked both stages of the examination. These responses contained highly evident explanation and justification of the interpretative ideas.

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by little or no justification of the interpretative decisions made. There was a lack of consistent information imparted or demonstrated across the two stages of the examination, and/or what was stated in Stage 2 bore little connection to what was presented in Stage 1.

The 2024 monologues

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Popularity ranking | Monologue chosen | Total % of students |
| 1 | *Salt Creek Murders* | 21 |
| 2 | *Bombshells* | 19 |
| 3 | *The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole* | 11 |
| 4 | *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* | 9 |
| 5 | *Hamlet* | 8 |
| 6 | *FANGIRLS* | 8 |
| 7 | *Top Girls* | 8 |
| 8 | *The Notebook of Trigorin* | 8 |
| 9 | *His Dark Materials* | 7 |
| 10 | *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* | 1 |

In 2024, 83% of students selected the acting and directing option and 17% selected the designing option.