



2007 Theatre Studies GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2007 end of year written examination for Theatre Studies was based on the reaccredited *Theatre Studies VCE Study Design* (2007–2011). It was consistent with the format of the sample examination which was produced by the VCAA during 2007. The paper covered five areas of study from the study design; all Unit 3 and 4 areas of study except Unit 4, Area of Study 1, which is assessed in the Monologue performance examination.

In general, students who understood the underlying concepts of the *Theatre Studies VCE Study Design* handled the examination well. Most students answered all of the questions on the paper. Students were able to support their written answers with illustrations, and many took advantage of this option. There was a total of 50 marks available for the paper.

Areas of strength and weakness

High-scoring papers demonstrated:

- sophisticated use of subject specific concepts and/or terminology
- a high level of skill in analysing and evaluating plays the student had attended during the year
- a sound working knowledge of how one or more of the following areas of stagecraft can be applied through the stages of production (production planning, production development, production season, production evaluation): acting, direction, dramaturgy, stage management, set, costume, lighting, properties, make-up, sound, multimedia and promotion (including publicity)
- a high level of skill in developing images and/or ideas from playscripts using acting and/or other areas of stagecraft
- a sound knowledge of the ways in which theatrical style(s) can inform the intended meaning of a playscript
- an understanding of the ways in which playscripts and contexts pertaining to them can be presented to an audience
- a high level of skill in applying practical and theoretical knowledge from the course to ‘stimulus material’ as presented in the examination.

Lower scoring papers demonstrated:

- limited use of subject specific concepts and/or terminology
- limited knowledge of areas of stagecraft, the stages of production, theatre styles and/or theatrical contexts
- limited application of practical and theoretical knowledge from the course
- little or no understanding of the difference between an analysis and an evaluation
- limited use of the marks allocated for each question as a guide for the depth of response required.

Advice for students

- Questions may be answered in any order.
- In the examination, students should be guided by the numbers of marks allocated to each question when determining the length and/or detail of their response.
- Students should take note of the particular type of response required in each question, as indicated by words such as ‘describe’, ‘evaluate’, ‘explain’, ‘discuss’, ‘compare’, ‘analyse’ and ‘identify’, and respond accordingly.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

The 2007 examination paper did not stipulate that a particular form of written response was required. Students chose to write in essay form, point form, short answer form or any combination thereof. All were considered acceptable, as long as the student addressed the focus of the question and the response was appropriate to the type required; for example, an evaluation or a description. Where an explanation or analysis was required, most students chose to write their answer in either short answer or essay format (that is, not in dot points).

The examination contained a detachable insert that contained ‘stimulus materials’ which students needed to draw on for their response to Question 4.

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Question 1

Students were asked to draw on key knowledge and skills pertaining to Unit 4, Area of Study 2 and interpret a scene from the perspective of an actor. The stimulus material for this question was a piece of playscript from the play *Old Times*, by Harold Pinter. The examination paper stated that no prior knowledge of the playscript or its contextual background was required to answer the question. Students were also informed that they could apply any theatrical style(s) to their interpretation of the scene.

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	2	9	19	25	22	21	4.1

Students were asked to explain how two images and/or ideas from the contextual background could inform their acting interpretation of the character of either 'Deeley' or 'Anna'.

A high-level response was characterised by:

- an imaginative explanation of how two well-selected images and/or ideas from the contextual background could inform an acting interpretation of the character in the scene
- the inclusion of well-chosen examples
- being written from the viewpoint of the actor
- the use of sophisticated theatrical language, terminology and expressions and/or concepts.

Following is an example of a high-level response.

Anna

Idea One

The theme/idea of hidden secrets could be conveyed, by an actor, from the contextual background as it discusses how all characters seem unsure of the events, with having at least one person lying. Anna is the character that appears suddenly after 20 years. She doesn't completely finish thoughts, 'you used to laugh-' and 'yes, she could be so...animated'. This idea could be used to affect the characters by Anna's vocalisation. Vocalisation: she could display the idea of hidden secrets by speaking in a low tone suggesting mystery and power. She could also use pauses and silences during and after sentences to demonstrate how she is always thinking before speaking – hiding secrets. Physicality: she could always have her hands enclosed on her lap as if hiding something from other characters.

Other idea

Intimacy is shown through the theme of relationships in the contextual background and in the scene where Anna says, 'Her eyes lit up' – intimacy between Anna and Kate. This could be conveyed in an interpretation of the character by vocalisation: use of soft, gentle voice and tone when character talks about Kate. Physicality: use of facial expression and use of intense eye contact with Kate to display their connection and whenever Deeley speaks, Anna could still remain looking at Kate to show how she always thought about her after 20 years.

An acceptable-level response was characterised by:

- a satisfactory explanation of how two well-selected images and/or ideas from the contextual background could inform an acting interpretation of the character in the scene
- the inclusion of appropriate examples
- use of appropriate theatrical language, terminology and expressions and/or concepts.

A low-level response was characterised by:

- identification of images and/or ideas from the contextual background with little or no link to the acting of the character
- limited understanding of the characters, the scene and/or its contextual background
- little use of appropriate theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	2	14	32	28	18	3.3

Students were asked to explain how one or more of costume, properties or sound could enhance their acting of the character in the scene.

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A high-level response was characterised by:

- an insightful and creative explanation of how one or more of costumes, properties and/or sound could enhance the acting of the character in the scene
- an explanation which, in an imaginative and sophisticated manner, linked the scene, acting and one or more of the stated other area(s) of stagecraft
- an explanation which used sophisticated theatrical language, terminology and expressions and/or concepts.

Following is an example of a high-level response.

Costume could help to enhance my acting of Anna as she could be dressed in a pure white silk suit to represent the character's class and elegance. White to represent her superficial purity and innocence, yet, underneath the white silk jacket could be a black T-shirt with stripes of red randomly throughout the T-shirt. This could represent the character's hidden secrets and how they were encased in white (purity). How Anna was not as she first appeared but had more malice and evil. Jacket would come off during performance to reveal T-shirt as her secrets were exposed.

An acceptable-level response was characterised by:

- a satisfactory explanation of how one or more of costumes, properties and/or sound could enhance the acting of the character in the scene
- an explanation which linked the scene, acting and one or more of the stated other area(s) of stagecraft
- an explanation which used appropriate theatrical language, terminology and expressions and/or concepts.

A low-level response was characterised by:

- a limited explanation of how one or more of costumes, properties and/or sound could enhance the scene with little reference to the acting
- limited linking of the scene, acting and one or more of the stated other area(s) of stagecraft
- little use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

Question 2

Question chosen	None	<i>Ghosts</i>	<i>The Spook</i>	<i>Ginger Mick at Gallipoli</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>All My Sons</i>
%	1	6	26	2	26	40

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	1	2	4	7	9	15	19	16	11	15	6.8

This question pertained to the 2007 VCE Theatre Studies playlist for Unit 3. Students were asked to select one of the listed questions, each of which pertained specifically to one of the plays on the 2007 Unit 3 prescribed playlist. The common link to the questions in 2007 was a requirement that the students **analyse** the particular play. In accordance with Unit 3, Area of Study 3, all students were expected to have attended one of the plays from the 2007 Unit 3 prescribed playlist and have read the corresponding written playscript.

A high-level response was characterised by:

- an insightful analysis which demonstrated a high level of understanding of the play in production and the written playscript/text from which it was derived
- inclusion of highly pertinent examples provided from the written playscript and/or play in performance
- use of accurate and sophisticated theatre language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

Following is an example of a high-level response.

Ginger Mick at Gallipoli by C. J. Dennis
Analyse how **acting** and one **other area** of stagecraft enhanced the text on which the performance was based.

Acting

The use of acting enhanced the text significantly. C.J. Dennis wrote these poems for the purpose of being performed, so the actions that occurred in the poetry were displayed on stage. In the 'Duck & Fowl' scene the restaurant conveyed the Chinese servants through the use of voice. The 'oriental' accent and the action of all four characters joining their hands and bowing towards each other was stereotypical of what is displayed by Buddhist monks. The acting in some other scenes was also heavily exaggerated such as when the soldiers were training in Egypt. The poems said that they were running through the hot sun every day and training with their bayonets. On stage however, the actors reinterpreted the text with a warm-up drill similar to a football match, as well as Smithy from Collingwood acting out that he was propelling down a flying fox through the use of mime.

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All characters were how they were described in the original text. The oafy Queenslander was tall, had a poor vocabulary, and didn't really understand much, and his facial expressions of an ajar mouth made him look physically stupid. Smithy from Collingwood had a cigarette in his hat always, as stated in the poetry, and the proud and pompous Keith had a queer accent and performed tasks that were looked down upon by the other soldiers, such as flossing his teeth.

Sound

The stagecraft of sound was used to enhance the performance. In the poems it states there was loud cries of gunfire and shells exploding. This was conveyed by the actors on stage banging their bayonets (which were in fact broomsticks interpreted as bayonets) on the ground at different paces at small jolts to represent the gunfire. The use of non-diegetic sound was also conveyed. During the fight scenes in the restaurant or between Mick and Keith at war, the song 'Eye of the Tiger', made famous by the 'Rocky' films, would blare so the audience understood a fight was about to commence. Clearly the characters couldn't hear the music because the play was set before and during World War One, with the song not even being in existence at the time. Finally in the 'Duck and Fowl' scene, the Asian characters whilst bowing towards one another would verbally hum the popular 'chopsticks' tune, to add to the comedy of the performance as well as the non-naturalism of the performance.

An acceptable-level of response was characterised by:

- a satisfactory analysis which demonstrated a sound understanding of the play in production and the written playscript/text from which it was derived
- inclusion of appropriate examples provided from the written playscript and/or play in performance
- use of appropriate theatre language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

A low-level response was characterised by:

- a limited analysis or a description which demonstrated a scant understanding of the play in production with little reference to the written playscript/text from which it was derived
- limited use of examples from the written playscript and/or play in performance
- little use of theatre language, terminology, expressions.

Question 3

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	3	12	36	50	2.3

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	9	39	47	2.3

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	12	12	35	41	2.1

This question pertained to the 2007 VCE Theatre Studies playlist for Unit 4. Students were asked to answer each of the three parts to the question, making reference to one of the plays from the 2007 prescribed playlist for Unit 4. The three parts of the question encompassed an actor's use of expressive skills, the status of one of the characters and one actor's use of the theatrical style(s) in the performance. Students were **not** expected to have read the playscript from which the performance was derived, because this is not required for the Area of Study on which the question is based (Unit 4, Area of Study 3).

A high-level response was characterised by:

- an insightful analysis, evaluation or description, as required
- a high level of understanding of the play
- inclusion of highly pertinent examples from the play pertaining to acting and/or the characters
- use of accurate and/or sophisticated, appropriate theatre language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

An acceptable response was characterised by:

- an analysis, evaluation or description, as required
- a satisfactory level of understanding of the play
- inclusion of examples from the play pertaining to acting and/or the characters
- use of theatre language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

Following is an example of an acceptable-level response.



Educating Rita

3a. Lisa Chappell used voice to interpret and help establish the role of Rita Chappell chose to give Rita a fairly high pitched and 'twangy' tone to emphasise the poor conditions she is living in. She tended to speed up at times when she was excited, however this did make it very difficult for the audience to understand what she was saying, which was a shame because it could have been important to the movement of the storyline. As Rita became more serious and educated, Chappell's voice lowered in pitch and slowed right down, which brought out a different side of Rita.

3b. Frank: The audience first sees Frank as a well respected professor of literature. It is not long before he appears to be a jaded and disillusioned teacher. Rita however has the idea that he is a god-like figure and can teach her everything about life. This naïve image depicts Frank as the more authoritative figure. Rita becomes more educated and she is able to read as well he can, but soon realises that there is more to life than books and literature. Frank's alcohol consumption helps to ride him into the ground and Rita soon becomes the more authoritative figure as Frank cannot match her zest for life.

3c. *Educating Rita* was a naturalistic play. Lisa Chappell conveyed this style through her hand gestures, use of the fourth wall and her use of characterisation. Although some of her movements were slightly exaggerated, everything was real and vulnerable from a brash, naïve hairdresser from Liverpool. A scouse accent was used to be true to the time and place of the character. The costume and props also helped her to create a 'slice of life' on the stage with a believable fourth wall, so the audience could be included.

A low-level response was characterised by:

- a limited understanding of the requirements of, and difference between, an analysis, evaluation or description
- a low level of understanding of the play
- inclusion of scant examples from the play pertaining to acting and/or the characters
- little use of theatre language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

Question 4

Question 4 was based on Unit 3, Outcomes 1 and 2 and required the students to draw on their knowledge and skills of how to apply stagecraft to interpret a playscript and to analyse the application of stagecraft. This question was worth the most marks on the 2007 examination paper, representing 40 per cent of the available marks. Students were required to draw on two or more of the stimulus materials provided when responding to the question. The question pertained to the storyline of a playscript, *In Cahoots* by Melissa Reeves, and its associated contextual background. The examination paper informed students that they were not required to have prior knowledge of the playscript, its contexts or the stimulus materials. Students were also instructed to write on the **same** area of stagecraft for both parts of the question.

Note: In the student examples that follow, the response to part a. (acting) is from a *different* student to that whose response is reproduced for part b. (make-up).

Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	3	10	31	28	24	3.5

Students were required to explain how aspects of the contextual background and two or more of the stimulus materials could influence their application of one area of stagecraft to a production of the cited play.

A high-level of response was characterised by:

- precise and perceptive use of appropriate theatre language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts to explain how the student's chosen area of stagecraft could be influenced by the contextual background and the stimulus materials
- insightful reference to, and understanding of, stimulus material which was linked to the contextual background of the play and to the chosen area of stagecraft
- use of pertinent and relevant example(s).

Following is an example of a high-level response.

Acting

In reference to the contextual background we are told that 'Brown Owl', the leader of the Brownie pack, opens the evening by welcoming the absent Commissioner. From this we can determine that the actor playing Brown Owl would use presentational modes of delivery to develop a strong actor-audience relationship (by also scanning the audience with her eyes in the introduction) and make the audience feel as if they are the 'parents and friends' of the brownies who have come to attend the parents and friends evening at the First Caldwell Street Brownie Hall. To communicate to the audience that she (Brown Owl) is the leader of the pack the actor could use Stimulus 5 to inform the way in which they hold their body and develop a strong, controlled posture befitting a brownie leader.

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In fitting with the style of theatre being a 'comedy with music' you could interpret this play into musical theatre and throughout the development stage of production, incorporate elements of dance as informed by Stimulus 11 to communicate themes of espionage and spying which were notably embodied by the exotic dancer and spy, Mata Hari.

An acceptable-level of response was characterised by:

- appropriate use of theatre language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts to explain how the student's chosen area of stagecraft could be influenced by the contextual background and the stimulus materials
- satisfactory reference to, and understanding of, the stimulus material, which was linked to the contextual background of the play and to the chosen area of stagecraft
- use of appropriate example(s).

A low-level of response was characterised by:

- little use of appropriate theatre language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts to explain how the student's chosen area of stagecraft could be influenced by the contextual background and the stimulus materials
- scant reference to, or understanding of, the stimulus material, contextual background and/or chosen area of stagecraft
- limited use of example(s).

Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	3	0	1	2	2	3	5	13	10	9	12	8	11	9	4	7	9.3

Students were required to select **one** of the stagecraft tasks listed and respond to it. Each of the 12 stagecraft areas in the course was listed with an appropriate task. Only the task pertaining to the stagecraft area of acting contained a reference to a specific stage in the production process (production development); however, there is potential for a specific stage of production to be included in the tasks pertaining to **any** of the stagecraft areas in future examinations.

A high-level of response was characterised by:

- a very high level of understanding of the chosen area of stagecraft
- use of sophisticated theatre language, terminology expressions and/or concepts
- a highly insightful and relevant understanding of the theatrical possibilities of the chosen area of stagecraft
- an imaginative application of the area of the stagecraft
- a perceptive demonstration of the relationship to, and influences between, the context of the play, the stimulus material, and the way in which the student interpreted it through the task pertaining to the area of stagecraft.

Following is an example of a high-level response.

Note: Below are the annotations and explanatory notes in the student's response. The annotations and written notes accompanied illustrations drawn by the student which depicted the make-up design for each of the three required characters.

4b. My work in make-up would be influenced by the aspects of the contextual background and the stimulus material, by the fact that in the play the characters are women pretending to be brownies (young girls). Drawing on the stimulus materials and contextual background I can design the make-up required for the characters. I would have to collaborate with the costume designer, to make sure that the make-up blends with their intended look, as well as mine. I would also have to work with lighting and discuss how much the lights are going to wash out the characters' faces and which lights will enhance certain aspects of the make-up. There would be discussion with the dramaturge to make sure I am staying true to the intended outcome. I would also discuss this with the director and the actors.

The student's annotations for this make-up design were as follows.

Character 1: Brownie

- *black eyeliner and mascara to make eyes a focus point, you can tell a lot about someone from their eyes*
- *shaped eyebrows*
- *eye make-up gives even more age*
- *oversized fake freckles, as if they are trying to seem young*
- *shading to give impression of developed cheekbones, something a child would not have (stimulus 16)*
- *graze on cheek and bruise on chin (stimulus 2)*
- *red lipstick to show age and need for make-up, to symbolise maturity and that they are hiding their real age*
- *slight crow's feet and frown lines to enhance age*
- *hair up in pony tails (stimulus 6)*

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- *rosy cheeks like a child's (stimulus 6)*

The student then annotated and explained the make-up for two more characters, a 'boy scout' and the 'Commissioner'.

An acceptable-level response was characterised by:

- a sound understanding of the chosen area of stagecraft
- use of appropriate theatre language, terminology expressions and/or concepts
- a sound understanding of the theatrical possibilities of the chosen area of stagecraft
- a satisfactory application of the area of the stagecraft
- a demonstration of the relationship to, and influences between, the context of the play, the stimulus material and the way in which the student interpreted it through the task pertaining to the area of stagecraft.

A low-level response was characterised by:

- a limited understanding of the chosen area of stagecraft
- little use of theatre language, terminology expressions and/or concepts
- a limited understanding of the theatrical possibilities of the chosen area of stagecraft
- limited application of the area of the stagecraft
- little evidence of the relationship to, and influences between, the context of the play, the stimulus material and the way in which the student interpreted it through the task pertaining to the area of stagecraft.