

# VCE Theatre Studies 2025–2029

Unit 1: History of theatre styles  
and conventions pre-1945

# Acknowledgement of Country

The VCAA respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pays respect to the ongoing living cultures of First Peoples.



# Familiarisation On Demand Videos

- **Video 1:** Overview of Changes
- **Video 2:** Unit 1
- **Video 3:** Unit 2
- **Video 4:** Unit 3
- **Video 5:** Unit 4

# VCE Theatre Studies 2025-2029

- Accreditation period of 2025–2029, with implementation commencing in 2025
- Consists of four units, with this video focusing on Unit 1
- Important to note, any changes to this study design will be announced through the VCAA Bulletin, the only source of official information from the VCAA. It is the responsibility of the VCE teacher to monitor these changes/advice regularly.

# Overview of Unit 1 – Key changes

| 2019-2024 Theatre Studies  | 2025-2029 Theatre Studies  |
|--|--|
| <b>Pre-modern theatre styles and conventions</b>                             | <b>History of theatre styles and conventions pre-1945</b>                  |
| <b>Area of Study 1</b> – Exploring pre-modern theatre styles and conventions | <b>Area of Study 1</b> – Exploring theatre styles and conventions pre-1945 |
| <b>Area of Study 2</b> – Interpreting scripts                                | <b>Area of Study 2</b> – Interpreting scripts                              |
| <b>Area of Study 3</b> – Analysing a play in performance                     | <b>Area of Study 3</b> – Analysing a theatre production in performance     |

# Unit 1- Key changes

| 2019-2024 Theatre Studies   | 2025-2029 Theatre Studies  |
|---|--|
| <b>Pre-modern theatre styles and conventions</b>  | <b>History of theatre styles and conventions pre-1945</b>  |
| <p>This unit focuses on the application of acting, direction and design in relation to theatre styles from the pre-modern era, that is, works prior to the 1920s. Students creatively and imaginatively work in production roles with scripts from the pre-modern era of theatre, focusing on at least three distinct theatre styles and their conventions. They study innovations in theatre production in the pre-modern era and apply this knowledge to their own works. Students develop knowledge and skills about theatre production processes including dramaturgy, planning, development and performance to an audience and apply this to their work.</p> | <p>This unit focuses on the application of acting, direction and design in relation to theatre styles and their conventions pre-1945, that is, from the era up to and including 1944. Students work in production roles with scripts from specific periods that fall between the beginning of theatre history until the end of 1944 focusing on at least two theatre styles, their conventions and histories. They study innovations in theatre production through the styles they explore and apply this knowledge to their interpretations of works.</p> <p>Students develop knowledge and skills about theatre production processes, including dramaturgy, planning, development, and performance to an audience, and they apply this knowledge and skill to their own work. They study safe, ethical, inclusive and sustainable (where possible, environmentally sustainable) working practices in theatre production.</p> |

# Unit 1- Key changes

| 2019-2024 Theatre Studies   | 2025-2029 Theatre Studies   |
|---|---|
| <b>Pre-modern theatre styles and conventions</b>  | <b>History of theatre styles and conventions pre-1945</b>   |
| <p>Theatre styles from the pre-modern era of theatre include Ancient Greek, Ancient Roman, Liturgical drama such as morality/miracle/mystery plays, Commedia dell'Arte, Elizabethan, Restoration comedies and dramas, Neo-classical, Naturalism/Realism, Beijing Opera, Noh, Bunraku and Kabuki and other traditional indigenous theatre forms.</p> <p>Students begin to develop skills of performance analysis and apply these to the analysis of a play in performance.</p> | <p>Theatre up to and including 1944 encompasses scripts from a wide range of styles including, <b>but not limited to</b>, Agitprop, Ancient Greek, Ancient Roman, Beijing Opera, Bunraku, Commedia Dell'Arte, Epic Theatre (early works), Elizabethan, Expressionism, Kabuki, Liturgical, Medieval, Miracle plays, Musical theatre, Naturalism, Neoclassical, Noh, Melodrama, Realism, Surrealism, Theatre of Cruelty and Wayang Kulit Theatre.</p> <p>Students begin to develop skills of performance analysis and apply these to the analysis of a play in performance.</p> |

These styles are examples only- not prescribed.

# Unit 1 Area of Study 1 – Key Changes

| 2019-2024 Theatre Studies   | 2025-2029 Theatre Studies  |
|---|--|
| <b>Exploring pre-modern theatre styles and conventions</b>  | <b>Exploring theatre styles and conventions pre-1945</b>   |
| <p>In this area of study students study scripts from the pre-modern era of theatre, that is, works prior to the 1920s. They study at least three distinct theatre styles from the pre-modern era and the conventions and scripts associated with each. Students study innovations in theatre production in the pre-modern era. They learn about contexts, cultural origins, production roles and performance possibilities for each of the selected theatre styles. Through practical workshops students gain knowledge of how these styles shaped and contributed to the world of premodern theatre.</p> | <p>In this area of study, students explore theatre styles and their conventions pre-1945. They study <b>two or more</b> distinct theatre styles pre-1945 and the conventions and scripts associated with each selected style. Students study <b>developments</b> and innovations in theatre production as they learn about contexts, production roles and performance possibilities for each of the selected theatre styles. Through practical workshops, <b>research and dramaturgy</b>, students gain knowledge of how these styles shaped and contributed to the world of theatre pre-1945.</p> |



# Unit 1 Area of Study 1

## 2019-2024 Theatre Studies study design

Exploring pre-modern theatre styles and conventions

## 2025-2029 Theatre Studies study design

Exploring theatre styles and conventions pre-1945

### Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to identify and describe distinguishing features of two or more theatre styles from pre-1945 and scripts associated with the selected styles.

### Key Knowledge

- conventions of three or more theatre styles from the pre-modern era
- approaches to interpreting scripts from the pre-modern era
- theatre contexts from the pre-modern era
- the use and application of theatre styles, dramaturgy, acting skills, directorial skills and design skills to shape interpretations of scripts from the pre-modern era
- approaches to creating and manipulating actor–audience relationships in the interpretation of scripts from the pre-modern era
- working practices in production roles to interpret scripts from the pre-modern era

- conventions of two or more theatre styles pre-1945
- scripts from selected pre-1945 theatre styles
- historical contexts of the styles studied including social, political and cultural
- working practices in production roles to interpret scripts written pre-1945
- knowledge about the application of conventions of theatre styles, dramaturgy, acting skills, directorial skills and design skills to shape interpretations of scripts selected, studied and explored

# Unit 1 Area of Study 1

2019-2024 Theatre Studies study design

Exploring pre-modern theatre styles and conventions

2025-2029 Theatre Studies study design

Exploring theatre styles and conventions pre-1945

## Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to identify and describe distinguishing features of two or more theatre styles from pre-1945 and scripts associated with the selected styles.

## Key Knowledge

- innovative practices established in theatre production in the pre-modern era
- theatre terminology and expressions.
- knowledge of theatre technologies and elements of theatre composition
- knowledge of safe, ethical, inclusive and sustainable (where possible, environmentally sustainable) working practices in theatre production.

# Unit 1 Area of Study 1

## 2019-2024 Theatre Studies study design

Exploring pre-modern theatre styles and conventions

## 2025-2029 Theatre Studies study design

Exploring theatre styles and conventions pre-1945

### Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to identify and describe distinguishing features of two or more theatre styles from pre-1945 and scripts associated with the selected styles.

### Key Skills

- identify and describe conventions of theatre styles from the pre-modern era
- research texts and contexts of scripts
- apply knowledge of theatre styles and acting, directorial and design skills to shape interpretations of scripts from the pre-modern era
- describe actor–audience relationships

- apply production roles (actor, director, designer) to scripts
- apply elements of theatre composition to realise theatrical possibilities within a script
- apply dramaturgical processes to interpret scripts
- convey the historical contexts of selected scripts including social, political and cultural
- apply appropriate conventions to present interpretations of selected scripts

# Unit 1 Area of Study 1

2019-2024 Theatre Studies study design

2025-2029 Theatre Studies study design

Exploring pre-modern theatre styles and conventions

Exploring theatre styles and conventions pre-1945

## Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to identify and describe distinguishing features of 2 or more theatre styles from pre-1945 and scripts associated with the selected styles.

## Key Skills

- undertake dramaturgy and work in production roles to interpret scripts
- identify and describe innovative practices established in theatre production in the pre-modern era
- use theatre terminology and expressions in writing and discussion.

- employ at least two production roles to interpret scripts
- apply theatre technologies and elements of theatre composition to enhance interpretation of a script for performance
- apply safe, ethical, inclusive and sustainable (where possible, environmentally sustainable) working practices in theatre production.

# Unit 1 Outcome 1 teaching and learning

## Exploring theatre styles and conventions pre-1945

### Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to identify and describe distinguishing features of **two or more theatre styles from pre-1945** and scripts associated with the selected styles.

### Teaching and Learning Example

Elizabethan Theatre

- *Exploring the social structures and restrictions of the time*
- *Exploring Sumptuary laws*
- *Exploring the financing of plays and shows*
- *Exploring community expectations around plays*
- *Exploring the Globe Theatre & Stage*
- *Looking at Shakespeare and Marlowe*
- *Looking at the conventions of Elizabethan theatre*
- *Deducing how these conventions relate to the context of the time period*

# Unit 1 Assessment

## Outcome 1

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to identify and describe distinguishing features of **two or more theatre styles from pre-1945** and scripts associated with the selected styles.

## Outcome 1 Assessment Task example

- A Theatre Style Infographic/Poster that identifies its context and relevant conventions, including an annotated excerpt from a play that connects to the selected style, demonstrating their application of the unit

# Unit 1 Area of Study 2 – Key Changes

| 2019-2024 Theatre Studies   | 2025-2029 Theatre Studies   |
|---|---|
| <b>Interpreting scripts</b>   | <b>Interpreting scripts</b>   |
| <p>In this area of study students focus on the presentation of scripts from the pre-modern era of theatre. They work creatively and imaginatively in at least two production roles to interpret scripts from three or more distinct theatre styles of the pre-modern era. Students study and apply relevant conventions and consider how work in production roles is informed by different theatre styles and contexts. They learn about processes for developing characters and consider the influence of the audience on work in production roles to enhance text interpretation.</p> <p>Throughout the production process, students will have opportunities to develop oral skills by participating in discussions and explaining how their work in production roles contributes to realising the production aims. They study and apply elements of theatre composition and safe working practices in theatre production</p> | <p>In this area of study, students focus on the presentation of theatre scripts <b>pre-1945</b>. They work in at least two production roles to interpret scripts from <b>two or more distinct pre-1945 theatre styles</b>. Students study and apply relevant conventions <b>of the styles</b> and consider how work in production roles is informed by different theatre styles, their conventions and <b>historical</b> contexts. They learn about processes for developing characters through acting skills appropriate to the style. They consider <b>audience culture</b> and the influence of an audience on their work in production roles to enhance the interpretation of scripts.</p> <p>Throughout the production process, students will have opportunities to develop oral skills by participating in discussions and explaining how their work in production roles contributes to realising the production aims. They <b>continue to study and</b> apply elements of theatre composition and safe, <b>ethical, inclusive and sustainable (where possible, environmentally sustainable)</b> working practices in theatre production.</p> |

# Unit 1 Area of Study 2

## 2019-2024 Theatre Studies study design

## 2025-2029 Theatre Studies study design

### Interpreting scripts

### Interpreting scripts

#### Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to work effectively in production roles to interpret scripts from **two or more pre-1945 theatre styles**.

#### Key Knowledge

- three or more theatre styles from the pre-modern era and the conventions of those styles
- elements of theatre composition
- approaches to creatively and imaginatively interpreting scripts
- the use of dramaturgy in theatre production
- the contexts of selected scripts
- the use of acting, direction and design to realise theatre styles from the pre-modern era
- ways of using elements of theatre composition to realise possibilities within a script

- **two or more pre-1945** theatre styles and their associated scripts and conventions
- **approaches to interpreting scripts in two or more theatre styles from pre-1945**
- the use of dramaturgy in theatre production
- the **historical** contexts of selected scripts **such as social, political and cultural**
- **the possibilities and purposes of recontextualisation in theatre when interpreting for a contemporary audience**
- ways of using elements of theatre composition to develop and realise theatrical possibilities within a script



# Unit 1 Area of Study 2

## 2019-2024 Theatre Studies study design

## 2025-2029 Theatre Studies study design

### Interpreting scripts

### Interpreting scripts

#### Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to work effectively in production roles to interpret scripts from **two or more pre-1945 theatre styles**.

#### Key Knowledge

- approaches to applying the production roles of actor, director and/or designer to interpret pre-modern theatre scripts
- safe working practices in theatre production
- the role of the audience in the pre-modern era
- the use of theatre technologies in theatre production.

- approaches to applying the production roles of actor, director and/or designer to interpret theatre scripts
- the role of audiences and **audience culture in interpreting scripts**
- **elements of theatre composition**
- **safe, ethical, inclusive and sustainable (where possible, environmentally sustainable) working practices in theatre production**
- **theatre terminology**

# Unit 1 Area of Study 2

## 2019-2024 Theatre Studies study design

## 2025-2029 Theatre Studies study design

### Interpreting scripts

### Interpreting scripts

#### Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to work effectively in production roles to interpret scripts from **two or more pre-1945 theatre styles**.

#### Key Skills

- creatively and imaginatively: – interpret scripts – apply elements of theatre composition to realise possibilities within a script
- apply dramaturgical processes to interpret scripts
- convey the contexts of selected scripts
- apply appropriate theatre styles and conventions to present interpretations of selected scripts
- employ at least two production roles to interpret scripts
- apply theatre technologies and elements of theatre composition to enhance interpretation of a script in performance
- apply safe working practices in theatre production.

- **interpret scripts**
- apply dramaturgical processes to interpret scripts
- convey the contexts **or any recontextualisations** of selected scripts
- apply conventions relevant to theatre styles of selected scripts
- employ at least two production roles to interpret scripts
- apply theatre technologies and elements of theatre composition to enhance interpretation of a script in performance
- demonstrate understandings of the role of audiences and audience culture

# Unit 1 Area of Study 2

2019-2024 Theatre Studies study design

2025-2029 Theatre Studies study design

Interpreting scripts

Interpreting scripts

## Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to work effectively in production roles to interpret scripts from **two or more pre-1945 theatre styles**.

## Key Skills

*(No further key skills for this slide- intentionally blank)*

- apply elements of theatre composition to realise possibilities within a script
- apply safe, ethical, inclusive and sustainable (where possible, environmentally sustainable) working practices in theatre production
- apply theatre terminology.

# Unit 1 Outcome 2 teaching and learning

## Interpreting scripts

### Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to work effectively in production roles to interpret scripts from **two or more pre-1945 theatre styles**.

### Teaching and Learning Example

- Annotating a script excerpt to find moments where style conventions can be applied
- Exploring and applying the elements of theatre composition to the 'Witches' in *Macbeth* or to a 'Chorus' in an Ancient Greek play
- Brainstorming how a character might be designed in context of its original play versus how we might design a character for a modern audience
- Exploring stage positioning and how it might convey different meanings to an audience while also applying the elements of theatre composition
- Researching the process of specific production roles

# Unit 1 Assessment

## Outcome 2

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to work **effectively** in production roles to interpret scripts from **two or more pre-1945 theatre styles**.

### Outcome 2 Assessment Task example

Two performances of the 'Witches' in *Macbeth* that use Elizabethan conventions and the experimentation of at least one element of theatre composition:

- One performance in the play's original context
- One performance that is recontextualised for a modern audience
- An oral presentation justifying their choices

A design presentation for an excerpt of a play from Beijing Opera that uses design conventions of the style and the application of at least one element of theatre composition

- One for a traditional, expected approach to the text
- One for a modern audience that uses the convention but with a modern aesthetic

# Unit 1 Area of Study 3 – Key Changes

| 2019-2024 Theatre Studies   | 2025-2029 Theatre Studies   |
|---|---|
| <b>Analysing a play in performance</b>  | <b>Analysing a <b>theatre production</b> in performance</b>   |
| <p>In this area of study students focus on an analysis of a professional performance of a script. They study the nature of performance analysis, including audience perspective, acting skills, directorial skills and design skills, and the ways in which the contexts and theatre styles identified or implied in a script are interpreted in performance. Students study the use of theatre technologies and the elements of theatre composition in professional theatre performance. Where possible, students should analyse a pre-modern play in performance.</p> | <p>In this area of study, students focus on analysing a professional performance of a script. <b>They attend a production of a play in performance</b> and study the nature of performance analysis, including analysing <b>audience culture</b>, acting skills, directorial skills, design skills and the ways in which the <b>historical contexts</b> and conventions of theatre styles identified or implied in a script are interpreted in performance. Students study the use of theatre technologies and the elements of theatre composition in a professional theatre performance. Where possible, students should attend and analyse a <b>pre-1945</b> play in performance.</p> |

# Unit 1 Area of Study 3

2019-2024 Theatre Studies study design

2025-2029 Theatre Studies study design

**Analysing a play in performance**

**Analysing a theatre production in performance**

## Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to analyse a live professional performance.

## Key Knowledge

- the nature of performance analysis
- how theatrical interpretations are informed by the contexts of the script
- approaches to using theatre styles to shape a performance, including use of elements of theatre composition
- acting, direction and design techniques applied to a play in performance
- the ways in which an audience constructs meaning from a theatre performance

- approaches to performance analysis
- how theatrical interpretations are informed by the historical contexts of the script including political, social and cultural
- the ways in which historical contexts may be recontextualised for a contemporary audience
- approaches to using theatre styles and their associated conventions to shape a performance
- acting, direction and design techniques applied to a play in performance
- the ways in which an audience constructs meaning from a theatre performance

# Unit 1 Area of Study 3

2019-2024 Theatre Studies study design

2025-2029 Theatre Studies study design

Analysing a play in performance

Analysing a theatre production in performance

## Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to analyse a live professional performance.

## Key Knowledge

- the establishment and maintenance of actor–audience relationships
- the use of theatre technologies in theatre performance
- the use of elements of theatre composition evident in a theatre performance
- theatre terminology and expressions

- the establishment, maintenance and/or manipulation of actor–audience relationships
- theatre technologies evident in a theatre performance
- elements of theatre composition evident in a theatre performance
- theatre terminology



# Unit 1 Area of Study 3

## 2019-2024 Theatre Studies study design

### Analysing a play in performance

## 2025-2029 Theatre Studies study design

### Analysing a theatre production in performance

#### Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to analyse a live professional performance.

#### Key Skills

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>analyse a theatre performance focusing on:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ways in which meaning is constructed by an audience</li><li>ways in which the performance is informed by the contexts of the script</li><li>how theatre styles are applied in a performance</li><li>the use of production roles in a performance</li><li>the use of technologies in a performance</li><li>the use of elements of theatre composition evident in a performance</li></ul></li><li>use theatre terminology and expressions in discussion and in writing.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ways in which meaning is constructed by an audience</li><li>ways in which the performance is informed by the historical contexts of a script</li><li>ways in which a script and its contexts inform any recontextualisation for a contemporary audience</li><li>how theatre styles and their associated conventions are applied in a performance</li><li>the use of production roles in a performance</li><li>the use of technologies in a performance</li><li>the use of elements of theatre composition evident in a performance</li><li>understanding of the role of the audience and actor–audience relationships</li><li>application of relevant theatre terminology.</li></ul> |
|---|--|

# Unit 1 Outcome 3 teaching and learning

## Interpreting scripts

### Outcome

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to analyse a live professional performance.

### Teaching and Learning Example

- Developing vocabulary lists to describe the aesthetic and technical terms of the various production roles
- Watching clips of recorded performances and focusing in on different production roles to see how they operate individually
- Reading excerpts from the script (if available) or the synopsis of the play to make predictions about the performance
- Looking at the layout of the theatre and venue to consider how they might use the space

# Unit 1 Assessment

## Outcome 3

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to analyse a live professional performance.

## Outcome 3 Assessment Task example

### Responses to structured questions

A range of questions covering key knowledge and skills

A range of marks allocated to the questions to represent higher and lower order thinking

### Essay

A personal essay about three moments the student enjoyed in the performance, incorporating analysis of two or more production roles

# Contact

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