2022 VCE Theatre Studies monologue external assessment report

General comments

In 2022, the Theatre Studies monologue examination comprised 10 monologue choices covering a range of scripts, theatre styles, forms, contexts, themes and cultural origins. Students chose one monologue from the prescribed list. Some monologues were reproduced 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 script to form the monologue, thus allowing students to address the challenge of shifts in time, persons, places and character development that this requires in Stage 1 of the examination, Interpretation.

Students who chose the acting and directing option were required to demonstrate their knowledge and skills working in both these production roles. Students were required to present their monologue interpretation in a 5 m x 5 m space, which was delineated in the examination room. Students were permitted to set up lighting, sound and other materials outside the 5 m x 5 m area, but lights, sound reproduction devices, data projectors and other audiovisual equipment had to be operated from within the designated space. Students who chose the designing option were to design for a solo actor performing the monologue in a 5 m x 5 m space under the examination conditions by applying any two of costume, set, properties, sound, lighting or make-up. Some students produced set, properties, lighting or sound designs for an acting space larger than the required size. This was viewed by assessors as being non-compliant.

For the first time, students could portray or refer to the gender of their chosen character as per the script or they could make an alternative choice. 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 their monologue interpretation students are required to address and demonstrate an understanding of audience culture and consider the intended audience for their interpretation. For the purposes of the interpretation, the assessors are fulfilling the role of an intended audience. As the assessment task outlines, actor/director students may choose to perform to the assessors as audience, to an imagined audience, or to both.

Students should be aware that the rooms used for the examination are not necessarily dedicated theatre performance spaces and their dimensions, acoustics, floor coverings 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, including carpet.

Students should be aware that some venues have standard-sized doors/doorways (some venues have a single, not double, doorway) and that items to be used for the examination need to fit through this opening (height and width). Students should note that they have a maximum of two minutes to set up their materials before commencing the examination and be aware they will be instructed when to commence setting up. Students are to bring their materials into and out of the examination room unassisted. At the completion of their examination, students are to return the examination space to its original state. This includes any cleaning of the examination space that may be required.

All electrical equipment must be tested and tagged, including extension cords. Students are permitted to bring a data projector, a laptop, a mobile phone, a tablet or other portable electronic device into the examination room. Recording functions, messaging and internet access on any devices/equipment has to be disabled before the student enters the room. Where a laptop is used, the student is required to direct the screen of the device towards the assessors. 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 a playback device.

Students are required to specify on the Interpretation Statement pro forma, supplied with the examination paper, a particular element of theatre composition (any one of cohesion, motion, rhythm, emphasis, contrast or variation) they have applied. In high-scoring responses, the elements of theatre composition were highly evident throughout the interpretation. In responses that did not score well, there was little evidence of a particular focus on the elements of theatre composition.

Specific information

This report provides sample answers, or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Stage 1 – Interpretation

Most students followed the examination specifications regarding the interpretation stage of the examination. A common error for acting and directing related to memorisation of lines. In this instance, assessors determined the extent to which lines that were not delivered, or were paraphrased, affected the interpretation overall. Common errors for designing included designs that were inappropriate for the space allowed, impractical for an acting interpretation of the monologue or designs that would overshadow the application of acting and directing.

In preparing for Stage 1, students should ensure that their interpretation contains all the required aspects as identified in the specifications for this examination and that all the criteria for the examination are addressed.

Students who choose the acting and directing option should note the following:

* They must ensure that, as well as acting, they demonstrate their application of directingto interpret the monologue and/or refer to this in Stage 2 of the exam; both acting and directing are assessed.
* While it is not obligatory, most students accompany their acting and directing interpretation with other production roles such as make-up, costume(s), props, set, lighting and sound.
* Students will notbe prompted. If a student forgets any of their lines, they should pick up the monologue where they can and continue with their performance.
* It is a requirement of the examination that students convey a theatre style(s) and that it is consistentlyapplied throughout their performance. The theatre style(s) can be the one(s) indicated in the original play scripty or another appropriate style(s).
* Acting and directing students should use appropriate theatre terminology and expressions associated with these production roles in Stage 2 of the examination.

Students who choose the designing option should note the following:

* According to the examination specifications, students are to design for an actor (one actor only) performing the monologue (but not for the wider scene or the whole play) to an intended audience within a single clearly lit space, and within the designated performance space of 5 m x 5 m. It is important that designers work within these parameters.
* In the examination specifications document, there are specific instructions regarding what designers should include in their interpretation. Students are advised to adhere to these requirements.
* Designers should be mindful that any symbolic intentions conveyed in their design should be clear to and be understood by the intended audience.
* The designs should complement the work of an actor performing the monologue but should not overly constrict the envisaged actor’s movements or character interpretation.
* Designing students should use appropriate theatre terminology and expressions associated with both design production roles in both stages of the examination.

Stage 2 – Oral interpretation statement

The examination concluded with students delivering an oral interpretation statement. It is the student’s responsibility, without instruction by the assessors, to move from the interpretation (Stage 1) to the oral interpretation statement (Stage 2), and the transition time is part of the time permitted for Stages 1 and 2 combined. Some students took a short break after Stage 1 to prepare themselves for Stage 2. This break is permissible but was included as part of the eight minutes of total time for the delivery of Stages 1 and 2 of the examination.

Students are permitted to read from notes written on or attached to the interpretation statement pro forma, which is part of the examination and which they are allowed to bring into the examination room. Some students memorised their oral interpretation statement, which is permissible. Students should be mindful that assessors base their assessment on what is orally delivered, not what is written on the pro forma and that they are hearing what is being said for the first time; it is important for students not to rush the delivery of their oral interpretation statement. Design students should avoid repeating in Stage 2 what was said or demonstrated in Stage 1. Following the oral presentation, a single hard copy of the interpretation statement is handed to the assessors.

The 2022 monologues

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

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| Popularity ranking | Monologue chosen | Total % of students |
| 1 | Tom Ripley, *The Talented Mr Ripley* | 19 |
| 2 | Patricia Highsmith, *Switzerland* | 15 |
| 3 | Beverley, *Come from Away* | 13 |
| 4 | Atticus Finch, *To Kill a Mockingbird* | 11 |
| 5 | Ariel, *The Tempest* | 10 |
| 6 | Jamie, *The Last Five Years* | 8 |
| 8 | Liz Morden, *Our Country’s Good* | 7 |
| Man, *Man Covets Bird* | 7 |
| 10 | Chorus, *Where in the World is Frank Sparrow?* | 5 |
| First Voice, *Under Milk Wood* | 5 |

In 2022, 84% of students selected the acting and directing option and 16% per cent selected the designing option.

Response to assessment criteria

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

High-scoring responses met all the specified requirements for the examination as outlined in the examination specifications.

Lower scores for acting and directing were often due to the student not delivering or not sufficiently making evident all the required dialogue and/or elements of theatre composition. Lower scores for designing were often due to the student designing for an acting space larger than the allocated space and/or elements of theatre composition not being sufficiently evident.

Criterion 2: Skill in undertaking and applying dramaturgy

High-scoring responses demonstrated and discussed the application of dramaturgical research both within the play script and beyond it, including such aspects as contexts of the prescribed monologue, the specified scene and the wider playscript, plot, structure, language of the script, character(s), themes, images and ideas, theatre style(s), intended meanings, theatrical possibilities, influences on the playwright(s) and previous productions of the play.

Lower-scoring responses confined the dramaturgical research to within the play script and/or did not sufficiently demonstrate how the research had informed the interpretation of the monologue.

Criterion 3: Skill in working in the selected production role

High-scoring interpretations provided clear evidence that the student had responded in a sophisticated manner to the monologue, applying a high level of skill corresponding to the selected actor/director role or two of the following design areas: costume, make-up, props, set, lighting or sound. Interpretations that did not score well demonstrated a lack of understanding and/or skill in the requirements of working in one or both of the selected production roles as outlined in the examination specifications.

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

High-scoring interpretations demonstrated a thorough understanding of the interrelationships between the prescribed monologue, the specified scene in which it was embedded and the wider script from which it was derived. There was clear evidence of how this understanding informed the interpretation of the monologue.

Interpretations that did not score well were characterised by limited evidence of the student’s understanding of the interrelationships between the monologue, scene and wider play script. This was often manifested in poor conceptual choices and/or a limited understanding the prescribed character and their development through the play.

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

High-scoring interpretations were characterised by a highly informed concept for the monologue interpretation that was creative and imaginative, while considering other aspects such as the playwright’s intentions, the plot of the play, its themes and characters, and the intended effects on the audience.

Interpretations that did not score well were less refined/sophisticated in nature and/or provided little to no evidence and dramaturgy. Interpretations that did not score well were less refined/sophisticated in nature and/or provided little to no evidence and dramaturgy. Lower scoring interpretations needed to be informed by and to have considered the contexts of the prescribed monologue, the specified scene and the wider playscript, plot, structure, language of the script, character(s), themes, images and ideas, theatre style(s), intended meanings, theatrical possibilities, influences on the playwright(s) and application of dramaturgy. Some responses that did not score well demonstrated a limited understanding of the creative and imaginative potential of the play overall.

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

High-scoring interpretations clearly conveyed the contexts of the monologue through application of the selected production roles. Some students chose to change the original context(s) (i.e. to recontextualise). In doing so it was evident that the changed context was appropriately informed by the student’s understanding of the monologue, the specified scene in which it was embedded, the wider playscript and dramaturgy.

Interpretations that did not score well conveyed the context(s) of the monologue in a superficial way and/or changed the original context in a way that was not appropriate for the content of the monologue and/or for the scene and/or the wider play.

Criterion 7: Skill in applying theatre style(s)

High-scoring interpretations clearly conveyed the student’s knowledge of the theatre style(s) of the original script or of the theatre style(s) they chose to apply instead. A range of conventions and characteristics of the theatre style(s) was evident throughout the interpretation of the monologue.

In interpretations that did not score well, the theatre style(s) was barely discernible within the interpretation or was superficially applied.

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

In high-scoring interpretations, there was direct correlation between the element(s) of theatre composition the student had stated on the interpretation statement pro forma and their use of these in their interpretation. High-scoring interpretations also demonstrated a high-level understanding of how the application of element(s) of theatre composition can contribute to or enhance work in the selected production role(s). Interpretations that did not score well were characterised by an inappropriate choice of the element(s) of theatre composition applied to the interpretation and/or little evidence of their application. In some instances, the choice and application of one or more elements of theatre composition for each production role did not complement the concept the student had determined for the interpretation.

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

High-scoring interpretations were characterised by a high-level understanding and appreciation of the effect the student’s interpretation could have on an intended audience. Some students stipulated the audience they envisaged for their interpretation (e.g. that Man from *Man Covets Bird* was being interpreted by the student for a teenaged audience consistent with the audience culture associated with the theatre style of Theatre for Young People).

Interpretations of the monologue that did not score well were presented with little to no understanding or acknowledgement of an audience that would view the student’s work in the selected production role(s) and/or how aspects of the interpretation could enhance the experience of an intended audience.

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

In high-scoring interpretations, there was a consistent correlation and interrelationship between the oral interpretation statement and the interpretation the student had presented. High-scoring interpretations demonstrated, explained and justified the decisions the student had made when working in their production roles.

Interpretations that did not score well were characterised by a general discussion about the monologue and the play from which it was derived and/or superficial information about the play and its context(s). A justification of interpretative decisions made was missing from some of these responses.