

Marking notes

May 2019

Literature and performance

Standard level

Paper 1

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Assessment criteria

These notes to examiners are intended only as guidelines to assist marking and as a supplement to the published external assessment criteria for written paper 1. They are not offered as an exhaustive and fixed set of responses or approaches to which all answers must rigidly adhere. Good ideas or angles not offered here should be acknowledged and rewarded as appropriate. Similarly, answers which do not include all the ideas or approaches suggested here may still be very good answers.

Of course, some of the points listed below will appear in weaker papers, but are unlikely to be developed.

Criterion A

[5 max]

The task is essentially focused on an analysis of a chosen passage from a prose text. Through this analysis the level of understanding will be evaluated by the examiner. This “understanding” of the text should include the relevance of the passage and its place in the context of the novel as a whole.

A synopsis of the plot of the text may be a first step towards demonstrating understanding but “good” and “perceptive” understanding will evaluate style and theme as well as plot detail. The analysis of these elements of the text will always be conducted with a view to the performance of the chosen passage. The importance of support and validation of all ideas through reference to the text is crucial. The text is fundamental and reference to it mandatory.

Criterion B

[10 max]

The “ideas” for performance are generated from the text and should not be independent of it. The textual “justification” required to support the “ideas for performance” in Criterion B will be drawn from a thorough contextualization of the passage and a secure understanding of its relevance to whatever issues the questions raise.

The association of “good” and “excellent” with the word “practical” attests to the value of ideas that can be realized in a practical staging context. These are ideas for the stage or a staging area and temptations to propose grandiose scenarios more applicable to “blockbuster” cinema than theatre should be resisted.

The candidate may draw diagrams or make sketches if it is thought that these are necessary to communicate the “ideas for performance” but such visual additions are not mandatory.

Criterion C

[5 max]

This criterion evaluates the clarity and coherence of the language used in the essay and looks at the appropriateness of the register, style and terminology which the candidate employs.

Clearly in an exercise which demands a facility in two disciplines, namely literature and performance, the candidate will be expected to demonstrate a facility in the use of the terminology specific to each discipline. As a writer of prose the candidate will be assessed on clarity, variety, precision and concision. The clarity of a written communication depends on accuracy in grammar, spelling and sentence construction. The effectiveness of a written communication will depend on effective use of vocabulary and a combination of preciseness and conciseness which results in an economy of expression. The persuasiveness of a piece of writing will depend on choice of idiom and style.

1. An adequate to good answer will:

- select a scene from a novel where there is an encounter between characters of differing values or perspectives
- briefly describe the contextualization of the scene in the larger scope of the novel
- demonstrate a secure understanding of the scene with relevant references to who the players are and the differences they embody
- present an analysis of the scene that validates the position taken about the difference in values
- propose a reasonable plan for actualizing the scene theatrically that includes such features as the choice of stage, set, lighting, proxemics and the like
- consider the audience to some degree in terms of how theatrical features will contribute to their understanding of the scene's value in adding interest to the novel's development
- present the description with apt theatrical terms, showing a sense of moving the material from page to stage.

A very good to excellent answer may also:

- deliver a persuasive and more subtle argument as to why the choice of scene has been made and the rationale for labeling it as one with dramatic potential
- in contextualizing the scene, show convincingly the threads of plot or character that either lead to this encounter or make it valuable to the narrative
- examine in a more sophisticated way the shape of the encounter and any of its subtleties that can be portrayed dramatically
- create a clearly practical and well-justified way in which the features can be delivered to a theatre audience, using theatrical terms in a judicious and well-informed way.

2. An adequate to good answer will:

- choose a moment in the novel in which one or more characters encounter surprise in the form of action or dialogue
- describe in brief the setting of the scene and character(s) involved, and its placement in the arc of the novel
- demonstrate understanding of the scene by the satisfactory use of detailed references
- offer a plan for dramatization that shows a reasonably practical deployment of stage features, including set, lighting, props, proxemics, and other relevant details
- comment on the proposed theatrical features in a way that justifies their choice in relation to the originating text and makes the dynamics of the scene available to an audience
- reveal a sense that a certain body of theatrical terms has been assimilated for adequate usage in the descriptions of the scene.

A very good to excellent answer may also:

- indicate a more perceptive understanding of the role the scene plays in the development of plot and/or character in the novel
- provide a coherent set of ideas for dramatization that effectively foregrounds surprise
- show a more refined or sophisticated sense of how ideas that work in a text can be transformed into a delivery onstage
- use theatrical terms in a fluent and well-informed manner.

3. An adequate to good answer will:

- select a scene in the novel that is convincing as a moment of understanding for a character or characters
- deliver contextualization that places, in a credible manner, the chosen scene in the larger plot development
- provide textual details that support the rationale for considering this as a moment of understanding, whether of one character or more
- tell how the transfer of the scene from the novel to a dramatization is proposed, with a description of the dialogue, the set, the proxemics and other important theatrical features
- show some awareness of the way the audience may be helped to grasp the intent of the scene
- couch the description of the transformation in appropriate theatrical terms.

A very good to excellent answer may also:

- choose a scene where the moment of understanding is more subtly delivered by the novelist and make a good case for selecting it
 - provide details that address more fully the stylistic aspects of the originating text
 - show a more sophisticated sense of the potential for dramatization that may in fact further illuminate the original
 - deliver the description of the scene in a way that shows considerable fluency with and understanding of theatrical terminology.
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