

Marking notes

November 2018

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 relevant passage from the novel where a power struggle between two characters will be clear
- examine the nature of the power struggle probably with reference to the wider context of the narrative
- focus on staging (rather than on the term “dramatically interesting” but this is nevertheless an important expectation in the question). Power in theatre is often registered through actors engaging in status conflicts and it is likely that the focus will be on how the actors engage in this respect
- appreciate the importance of positioning on stage (eg will there be levels?), movement denoting status, posture, and some of the broader characteristics of diction.

A very good to excellent answer may also:

- include ideas for staging and acting which are far more specific, less general
- show a preoccupation with development of the power struggle, (this is where the interest in it may lie drastically); characterization and staging will be more fluent and therefore more engaging for the audience and the acting will be less generic and more sharply observed
- establish a clear link between the possibilities offered by the literary qualities and style of the original passage and the dramatic choices taken in staging and acting
- actively pursue the “interest” of the staging for the audience; the ideas for acting and staging will reflect that.

2. An adequate to good answer will:

- select a passage that is relevant to the question. It is important to note that the question is in two parts, the first part asks the candidate to “establish the mood” for the death scene which follows. The second part asks the candidate to stage the death scene “to establish its importance”. These questions will condition the choice of the passage for staging
- offer general ideas as to how mood might be established; here design elements like staging and lighting might come to the fore and the performance space should be established
- explore the importance of “acting” to address the second part of the question
- establish the importance of the death scene by contextualizing it in the novel
- explore literary features in the original passage that can provide cues for dramatic action and relevant staging and design motifs
- show knowledge of the passage and some ideas for staging (these will cover the main areas mentioned here but may lack specificity). As the apprehension of the original passage and its context becomes more selective and its theatrical adaptation becomes more detailed, it will reflect the work of a good candidate.

A very good to excellent answer may also:

- be specific and precise in how they write about the original passage
- select a passage which is relevant and interesting
- include insightful and gripping ideas for staging and how the status of the dying character(s) and his, her or their importance might be dramatized
- use terminology to convey ideas which will move fluently between prose and theatrical registers
- have an analytic focus rather than narrative
- show an understanding of how mood might be generated
- explore the importance of dramatic elements like tension and climax
- analyse ways of establishing status on stage with a fluent interaction between the passage and the staging.

3. An adequate to good answer will:

- select a passage that is relevant to the question
- outline how, through staging and action, the intrigue and its significance might be presented to an audience
- explore the significance by looking at the wider context of the intrigue and show an understanding of the novel as a whole
- show knowledge of the selected passage identifying its significance in the wider narrative
- include ideas for staging and action that will attempt to convey the kind of intrigue the passage describes (these ideas may not always be connected)
- show an awareness of the audience
- comment on lighting effects or the use of particular performance spaces
- comment on how the intrigue influences acting and proxemics.

A very good to excellent answer may also:

- connect the passage of intrigue to the wider narrative and might do so by commenting on theme, motifs, or a variety of connecting ideas
 - show awareness of the specific importance of the passage and, in the staging of it, convey the particular nature of the intrigue
 - explore the significance of the scene for the audience with a focus on how staging and action can best facilitate clear communication of the features of the scene for the audience
 - consider lighting effects and other staging elements to register meaning
 - explore how action is used to establish a clear mood or moods for the audience
 - analyse the interaction between staging and action.
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