Assessment Report

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Level 2 Drama 2021

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Part A: Commentary

Candidates who read, understood and responded to the entire question, rather than answering individual bullet points in isolation, provided stronger answers. Bullet points are a guide to the selection of relevant information and are designed to support scaffolding of a comprehensive answer, but are not to be treated as the question. At Level 2, candidates should have a sound understanding of the terms 'elements', 'techniques', 'conventions', and 'technologies'. Across both 91215 and 91219, several candidates produced incorrect responses due to misunderstanding these foundational aspects of drama – for example, answering a question about technologies with a response regarding conventions. Familiarity with drama terminology needs to be secure enough to ensure that responses are accurate.

A confident grasp of drama terminology saw candidates reach higher levels of achievement through accurate, well-composed answers. Candidates are also expected to show an understanding of a theatre form (91215) or a live performance (91219) using detailed evidence from either a text (91215) or
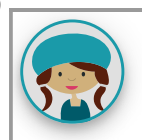
performance (91219). To do so successfully, candidates need an accurate and in-depth knowledge of the text or performance. In 2021, providing this level of accurate, detailed evidence from a text or performance was a challenge for some. Candidates who demonstrated in-depth knowledge using detailed evidence were rewarded with higher levels of achievement.

Part B: Report on standards

91215: Discuss a drama or theatre form or period with reference to a text

Examinations

The examination included three questions, and candidates were required to respond to all three. Each question had two parts, with a response required for both. Question One required candidates to apply their understanding of a typical technology and idea or theme of the form or period. Question Two required candidates to apply their understanding of a typical character and the social context of the form or period. Question Three required candidates to apply their understanding of a key origin of the form or period. All three questions required candidates to apply their understanding of the theatre form or period with reference to a text, from which they were to provide detailed evidence. The questions covered the requirements of the 91215 Assessment Specifications: "Candidates should be familiar with origins of the drama or theatre form, character, historical / social context, use of technologies, and themes and ideas. Candidates need to be aware that the questions may cover a combination of features of the drama or theatre form and period, and the evidence of these in the text studied."

Observations

Overall, candidates demonstrated a strong knowledge of the drama or theatre forms or periods. Some candidates demonstrated an in-depth, and in some cases insightful, knowledge of the drama or theatre form or period, but did not make specific references to a text and therefore did not meet the achievement criteria. Candidates need to ensure that they are writing about the form or period with reference to a text. Using specific and detailed evidence from a text across the

range of responses helped candidates to develop clear answers. A firm knowledge of the difference in the features of the form or period helped candidates to develop accurate responses. Candidates need to be able to differentiate between conventions, technologies, and acting styles to produce successful responses to the questions posed. Having a clear understanding of the features also supports candidates to clearly articulate how these communicated the text's themes and ideas, and overarching purpose.

Candidates who wrote about texts that sit outside of the historical / social context of the form or period were often limited in their answers, as they were unable to articulate an accurate understanding of the traditional historical / social context. For example, in writing about Children of the Poor by Mervyn Thompson as being an example of epic theatre, candidates were struggling to successfully articulate understanding of the traditions of Brecht's epic theatre.

Candidates should ensure that they are familiar with the social / historical context of the form or period as well as the social / historical context of their play and the playwright. The most common forms or periods written about successfully were Elizabethan theatre, epic theatre, Ancient Greek theatre, American realism, and absurdist and feminist political theatre. In all these forms, candidates were rewarded at all levels of achievement. Candidates who wrote about commedia dell'arte, New Zealand theatre, physical theatre, and musical theatre typically did not reach Excellence, due to a lack of perceptive understanding of the form or period. To achieve at higher levels, candidates must be able to insightfully connect their discussions of features to the greater purpose of the text.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achieved** commonly:

- wrote about a text relevant to the drama or theatre form or period

- attempted only part (a) of each question or produced generalised responses, with limited reference to evidence that was not detailed enough for Merit

- demonstrated understanding of typical technology for Question One, but could not show adequate understanding of a theme / idea

- demonstrated understanding of a typical character for Question Two, but could not discuss how the character reflected the social context

- demonstrated understanding of a key origin for Question Three, but could not make connections to the chosen text.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- produced generic responses about the drama or theatre form or period without any reference to, or providing any evidence from, a text, or produced responses that showed lack of understanding of the differences between features of the form – for example, confusing technologies and conventions

- interpreted the questions posed incorrectly, produced responses that were incomplete, or failed to answer one or more of the questions

- did not have knowledge of a key origin of their chosen form for Question Three.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- produced responses that showed clear knowledge of the drama or theatre form or period and their chosen text, and responded to both parts of the question in some detail

- supported their responses with detailed, well-chosen evidence or produced responses that did not yet provide detail regarding the text's purpose, which is required for Excellence

- demonstrated clear understanding of a theme / idea for Question One, but could not discuss this perceptively in relationship to the text's purpose

- demonstrated clear understanding of social context for Question Two, but could not discuss this in relation to the greater purpose of the text

- demonstrated clear understanding of a key origin for Question Three, but could not make insightful connections to the chosen text.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- produced original responses that were not rote learned

- used specific, well-considered evidence to support their responses, providing relevant and meaningful references to the text that were well-chosen to articulate an insightful point

- produced responses that demonstrated insightful understanding of a drama or theatre form or period, and how the text reflected this

- produced responses that articulated perceptive understanding of texts, and therefore the playwright's purpose

- demonstrated perceptive understanding of technologies, themes / ideas, social / historical context, and origins of the drama or theatre form or period.

91219: Discuss drama elements, techniques, conventions and technologies within live performance

Examinations

The examination included three questions, and candidates were required to respond to all three. Each question had two parts, with candidates being required to respond to both. Question One required candidates to apply their understanding of a character from a live performance they had seen or performed in. Question Two required candidates to apply their understanding of dialogue in a live performance they had seen or performed in. Question Three required candidates to apply their understanding of technology in a live performance they had seen. All three questions required candidates to apply their understanding of drama elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies within a live performance(s), from which they were to provide detailed evidence. The questions covered the requirements of the 91219 Assessment Specifications: "Candidates should be familiar with character, dialogue, and the use of drama techniques and technologies. Questions may cover a combination of elements, techniques, conventions and technologies."

Observations

Candidates' careful selection of live performances to discuss is essential to their success. Candidates wrote well on their own performances when these provided the opportunity to write in depth around the aspects outlined in the specifications – for example, those performances that had complex characters and / or were rich in a range of technologies. Candidates who wrote about musical theatre or ballet performances had difficulty reaching the higher levels of achievement, as they found it challenging to discuss in detail, or with any insight, character changes, dialogue, or themes / ideas. This does not suggest that musical theatre is inappropriate – more that candidates need to be guided to look beyond the aesthetics of the performance, to focus on the powerful messages that can be delivered through a range of performances within this theatre form.

Candidates who chose performances that lent themselves well to detailed discussions of the aspects outlined in the specifications found greatest success –

for example, New Zealand performances of Owls Do Cry, Paper Sky and Dracula. With regards to both performances seen or performed in, candidates should be guided to discuss performances that provide opportunities to write about the aspects outlined in the assessment specifications.

Candidates were most successful when writing about selected moments in a live performance that lent themselves well to the question asked. This demonstrated that they had understood the question and carefully thought about the moment that would best allow them to demonstrate their understanding of the elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies.

When writing about techniques, candidates should use specific and effective drama terminology: vocabulary such as volume, posture, proximity, and pace. Candidates who showed limited command of this subject-specific language hampered themselves through generalised descriptions of techniques used that were not supported by detailed evidence. For example, a statement such as "[…] the actor used voice to show […]" provides no specifics regarding the use of voice itself, and the description "[…] the actor was bent low […]" could be strengthened by the use of the term 'posture' to provide a more specific response.

Candidates should be guided to develop knowledge of, and use accurate, specific drama terminology in their responses. Similar issues regarding specificity were also found when candidates wrote about the technology of lighting. Candidates were able to describe the use of lighting generally, for example, "white light", but showed little consideration for the direction, focus or intensity of the lighting. Costume and set discussions often proved more detailed. Candidates should be guided to write about chosen technologies in a manner that is specific and detailed. Candidates were most successful in their consideration of the wider world when the connections were clearly linked back to the performance. Candidates should be encouraged to extend beyond the performance in a manner that is relevant. When they do, they are often able to perceptively articulate on the greater impact of the performance, as intended by the actor or director, or as experienced by an audience member.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achieved** commonly:

- identified and wrote about specific moments in performance

- produced responses that showed some accurate understanding of the terminology used in the questions

- used drama vocabulary in an accurate but limited manner. For example, when explaining a performer's use of techniques, using vocabulary / phrases such as, "paced", "voice just loud enough", "looked at floor"

- offered limited description or evidence for Question One, explained character change simply – for example, "drinking made him difficult" – and explained simply what the audience learned from this change

- explained the use of dialogue for Question Two and techniques with some clarity

- explained how technology was used for Question Three to support the communication of a message in the performance

- produced responses that commented on a section of the performance with some success, but were unable to show understanding of wider themes / ideas related to the play as a whole, leading to inaccurate and repetitive answers.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- gave incomplete responses, or failed to answer the questions asked

- had only a very rudimentary understanding of the performance

- focused on the plot of the performance, rather than drama elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies

- showed a lack of understanding of terminology, e.g. writing about techniques in a response to a question that required a discussion of technologies, or provided little specific evidence

- identified a change in a character, a moment of dialogue, a technique used, an impact, a technology and / or a message, but were unable to explain the meaning of these aspects of live performance in relationship to one another.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- produced responses that, where directed, were clear and specific about chosen moments

- demonstrated clear and coherent understanding of the aspects of live performances, supported by detailed evidence

- used drama terminology accurately and in a detailed manner

- explained references to wider themes and ideas, purpose, issues, and messages in a confident, detailed and evidenced manner.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- produced responses that demonstrated effective selection of chosen moments to answer the question with perception

- supported responses with highly appropriate evidence from the performance that linked their knowledge of the performance to their own experiences and / or wider world issues

- commented on the drama aspects and deeper themes in a way that demonstrated perceptive knowledge of the purpose, the world of the play, and the wider world

- made perceptive links between live performance and impact on the audience, acknowledging the role of the audience in live performance

- demonstrated in-depth consideration for Question One of character change in connection with what the audience learned about change, making very specific and perceptive links to the concept of change and its place in the wider world

- demonstrated perception for Question Three with regard to the symbolic value of the use of technologies.

Drama subject page

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