

For the AS Drama examination of 2017 a total of 61 candidates selected 18 questions (out of a possible 24) from 9 plays (of 12.) Of the 18 questions attempted, 5 were focussed on Directing, 4 on Acting, and 9 on Set/Costume/Lighting Design. This tendency toward the practical-focussed questions gave an advantage to those responses that were supplemented with perceptive and clear diagrams.

No candidates wrote on *Children Of The Poor*, *The Miser* or *Oedipus* this year.

At the low end, five candidates wrote on Euripides, seven on Wilde, seven on Brecht and six on Churchill. Larger numbers of candidates wrote on Shakespeare (29), *Oh What A Lovely War* (20) and Kafka/Berkoff (38).

In general, responses this year were well-expressed and clearly written with few egregious factual errors and generally displaying decent knowledge of the plays discussed. Misspelling was an alarmingly common feature and handwriting seems to be deteriorating generally. Those responses typed by a transcriber were a relief to mark.

A large cohort answered questions on Kafka/Berkoff and did fairly well in showing familiarity and hands-on experience with the production and performance challenges of that work. However, some of the responses were incomplete or seemed very rushed, indicating time management is an ongoing challenge. Any time spent on fully apprehending questions as they are written and making notes that directly address them seems it is always well spent.

There was also an indication of what has proved fairly common over the last few years' responses: the issue of what candidates judge to be comic, comedic, or amusing for an audience. There were many (quite imaginative) ideas for emphasising humour, satire, and comedy in performance (in *Much Ado* and *Lovely War*) that seemed a little at odds with the texts and audiences discussed. It may be that in discussing plays identified as comedies, candidates are tempted to make whatever is under discussion (lighting, costume, set design) contribute to the comic dimension.

Better judgment was evident in responses about what might alienate audiences from the conventions of theatre performance (in *Mother Courage*, *Metamorphosis* and *Lovely War*), although again what actually contributes to an explicitly anti-war or anti-capitalist statement or critique might not lie primarily in the colouring of costumes or use of makeup.

The Shakespearean responses drew high marks, including at least two 20 point answers that were a joy to read. Those writing on Shakespeare in terms of character interpretation did a rather good job overall (although how analysis translates to an actor's performance was sometimes not very practical), and textual evidence was ample well-employed.

Careful reading of the questions remains paramount. Many responses spent valuable time providing background material (on the play, the author, past productions and historical context) that did not contribute to focusing on the question. This was time wasted as far as accumulating marks was concerned. The temptation to include unrelated (but well-drilled) material from other aspects of theatrical analysis or experience sometimes proves too great. This has the unfortunate effect of a double penalty.