

2017 VCE Theatre Studies Stagecraft examination report

General comments

In 2017, the Theatre Studies stagecraft examination comprised 14 monologue choices covering a range of theatrical styles, forms, contexts, themes and cultural origins. There were six female character monologue choices, six male character monologue choices and two neutral character monologue choices. Students chose one monologue from the prescribed list. In 2017, some monologues were reproduced in their entirety, while others were formed by cutting and pasting passages from one or more parts of the playscript to form the monologue, thus allowing students to address the challenge of shifts in time, persons and places that this requires. Students could choose to interpret their chosen monologue using either Acting and Direction or Design (any two of costume, set, properties, sound, make-up). In 2017, 17% of students chose the Design option. For each monologue, students responded through both Acting and Direction, and Design. In 2017 a camera was used to record each student's examination (all three stages) and students accommodated this change without incident. However, some students performed to the camera, which was not stipulated or required.

The stagecraft examination (its preparation and execution) requires students to think analytically, creatively and imaginatively. For example, students are required to select a monologue and analyse its content, themes and meanings informed by their understanding of the scene from which the monologue derives and the whole playscript. Students create an interpretation of the monologue either through Acting and Direction or Design. In doing that, they use their imagination and creativity to arrive at their own interpretation of the monologue informed by their understanding of the intended meanings of the text and research they conduct from both within and outside of the playscript.

There are specific requirements for interpreting the monologue whether the student chooses to use Acting and Direction or Design. The specifications are different for each option. Students are advised to become familiar with and adhere to these specifications. Students should also follow the 'Guidelines for students and teachers', as printed on the examination, and note that the content of the guidelines may change from year to year.

The VCAA sets a single prescribed version of each monologue for this examination. This is the only version of the monologue that is examinable. Upon request, a PDF of the complete set of prescribed monologue texts can be sent to schools. Details of how to make this request are on the examination. Additionally, the examination gives instructions as to which lines of dialogue are to be included and which are to be omitted from the interpretation of the prescribed monologue. The interpretation of deleted passages/lines is not examinable. Unless otherwise indicated, students can choose to apply the published stage directions, ignore them or create their own. If a student chooses to sing some or all of the song lyrics contained within a monologue, the melody must be consistent with the published score of the music. Any published version of the score is acceptable.

Re-contextualisation of the monologue (that is, changing details such as the original time and/or setting to another context) is permissible for this task. However, any re-contextualisation decisions

for the monologue should also be appropriate for the scene in which the monologue is embedded and the playscript as a whole. Students may also change the theatrical style(s) of the monologue and, if so, the same considerations (above) should apply.

Students should be aware that the rooms used for stagecraft examinations are not necessarily theatrical performance spaces and that their dimensions may vary. It should be noted that students are allocated an examination room. Students and teachers are not permitted to request a change of room. Students should plan for their interpretation to be flexible enough for a variety of room sizes, lighting conditions and floor coverings. Students should be aware that venues are hired spaces and, therefore, the furniture supplied is not to be stood upon. Under no circumstances should the furniture or the floor be damaged. The examination room contains two chairs for the student to use, should they wish to do so. No table is supplied. When in doubt, or if there are particular requirements, students should bring their own furniture. The assessors' table(s) is for assessment purposes only. Students are not to place objects on the assessors' table(s) or use the table(s) in any way during their examination. Students must not use any objects or substances that may cause injury to themselves or others, or that may damage the examination room.

Each examination room has a single power point for the use of electrical equipment, such as audio devices. However, it is the student's responsibility to plan for the use of such equipment beforehand, including considering whether to use batteries and/or the power supply in the room. Students are also advised to check the sound level of audio equipment and, if applicable, to be familiar with the remote control devices for the equipment. All electrical equipment should be tested and tagged, including extension cords. Students may bring a laptop, MP3 player, tablet or other such portable electronic device into the examination room. Recording functions on audio equipment must be disabled during the examination. Where a laptop is used, the student should direct the screen of the device towards the assessors. A mobile phone is permitted in the examination room if it is to be used as a prop or as an audio replay device. However, the phone and wi-fi functions must be disabled before the student enters the room.

Students should note that it is stipulated on the examination that they have a maximum of two minutes to set up their materials before commencing the examination. Students must not exceed this time limit. Failure to do so may result in the student not having sufficient time to complete all three stages of the exam. It is advised that students make judicious decisions about the materials/items they bring into, and set up in, the room.

Students are required to hand a hardcopy of their Framing Statement to the assessors after delivering their oral framing statement. Only one copy is required.

For students choosing the Acting and Direction option:

- Students should ensure that, as well as acting, they demonstrate their application of **direction** to interpret the monologue; both are assessed.
- While an accent is not obligatory, in 2017 many students used one. Students should be mindful of the pronunciation of place names, the names of other characters and so on contained within the monologue
- Students will not be prompted.

For students choosing the Design option:

- According to the specifications, students are to design for 'a single clearly lit, relatively small space where no changes to the lighting grid are permitted'. Designing for a large theatre space is outside the specifications of this task.
- The primary focus for the design is the prescribed **monologue**, rather than the play as a whole. Reference to the greater world of the play is permitted as long as it adds meaning to the design for the **monologue** component.

- The design is for a performance of the monologue as if by a **single** actor performing the character(s) who delivers the monologue. It is **not** necessary to design for other characters in the monologue, scene or play.
- In 2017 some students made the assumption that an audience member would understand the inherent meanings behind their design choices. Design students should be mindful that any symbolic intentions conveyed in their designs should be clearly evident to, and would be understood by, an audience.

Qualities of work presented by high-performing students	Characterised by
a sophisticated interpretation of the monologue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a thorough knowledge of the monologue, the associated scene and the whole playscript, with evidence that the student had applied ideas in their interpretation based on findings from extensive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – direct research, for example, researching the contexts of the play or the playwright – indirect research, for example, researching associated times, settings, themes or ideas • a strong and clearly articulated/demonstrated directorial/design concept for the interpretation
a strong correlation between the interpretation of the monologue and its context(s), including those within the scene and the greater play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the context chosen by the student being clear, appropriate and articulated consistently across the Framing Statement, performance/presentation and responses to question(s)
a high-level understanding of the intended meanings of the playwright	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well-considered application of stagecraft, directorial or design choices that is informed by the intentions of the playwright/the intended meanings of the playscript
strong understanding and application of theatrical style(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a high level of skill in the application of the theatrical style(s), consistently demonstrated across the three stages of the examination through directorial/design choices and the way that research into the theatrical style(s) and its conventions has informed the performance/presentation
clearly evident application of acting/directorial/design decisions in the performance/presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ideas and choices demonstrated in the performance/presentation being highly consistent with the interpretation outlined in the Framing Statement. The decisions take into account aspects such as the themes and subtext of the monologue/play, a sense of audience, use of the space, and the interrelationships between the monologue, the scene and the whole playscript
high-level use of theatrical terminology and expressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistent and sophisticated use of theatrical terminology and expressions throughout the examination

Qualities of work presented by high-performing students	Characterised by
a strong awareness of the relationship between stagecraft and the audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for Acting and Direction students, creation and maintenance of a sophisticated and effective interrelationship between acting, direction and design, with an awareness of audience. For example, through directorial choices such as blocking, movement, use of performance and expressive skills, and choices relating to how costume, make-up, props, set pieces and/or sound were used to enhance their interpretation of the monologue in performance • for Design students, explanations in their presentation of how their design choices would enable the actor to create and maintain sophisticated and effective interrelationships between acting, direction, design and audience. For example, references to qualities of materials such as weight or flow, the shape, height or placement of set pieces, manipulation of props, intended effect/impact of make-up techniques or colours, textures, etc.

Specific information

Students should note that all of the assessment criteria have equal weighting, and so they should ensure that their interpretation of the monologue meets the requirements of each criterion.

The first assessment criterion is quantitative rather than qualitative – it assesses whether the student has met the requirements of the task, rather than considering how well the monologue was interpreted. To achieve full marks for criterion 1, students needed to adhere to the requirements of the stagecraft area (Acting and Direction or Design), as outlined in the VCE Theatre Studies stagecraft examination specifications and on the examination. Where students did not meet the requirements of criterion 1, in most cases memorisation of lines (for Acting and Direction) and not quoting specific lines from the monologue (for Design) were the primary contributing factors.

The examination is divided into three stages – stage 1: Framing Statement, stage 2: Interpretation and stage 3: Question(s). The student's responses to all three stages contributed to their score for the examination. Students should be mindful to provide **consistent** information across the three stages of the examination.

Stage 1: Framing Statement

The examination began with students delivering an oral Framing Statement. They were permitted to read from notes written on or attached to the Framing Statement form, which was part of the examination and which they were allowed to bring into the examination room. Following the oral presentation, a hard copy of the Framing Statement was handed to the assessors.

Students should be mindful that assessors base their assessment on what is **said**, not what is written on the form. It is not a requirement that students memorise the content of the Framing Statement; however, this is an option. Students should take no longer than two minutes for stage 1 of the examination. Some students prepared lengthy Framing Statements, which they struggled to deliver within two minutes. Students should consider the length of their Framing Statement so that it can be delivered within the allocated time.

Transition between Framing Statement and Interpretation

Students should start their interpretation (stage 2) as soon as possible after delivering the oral Framing Statement. Students should note that it is **their responsibility** to move from the Framing

Statement (stage 1) to the interpretation (stage 2), and that the transition time is part of the seven minutes permitted for stages 1 and 2 combined.

Stage 2: Interpretation

Most students followed the examination specifications with regard to the interpretation stage of the examination.

In preparing for stage 2, students should ensure that:

- they make a clear distinction between the completion of their oral Framing Statement (stage 1) and the commencement of their interpretation (stage 2)
- their interpretation (stage 2) contains all of the required elements as contained in the specifications for this examination.

Students should also note that:

- as specified on the 2017 examination, unless otherwise stated, students may adhere to the stage directions contained in the prescribed text or use them as a guide
- where a prescribed monologue comprises two (or more) passages from different sections of a playscript, students should ensure that their interpretation contains (or responds to) all of the prescribed text in each section
- the materials the student brings into the examination room need to be well chosen. Students should consider what each item adds to the overall concept or vision of their interpretation and be mindful of the time it will take to bring the materials into the room and set them up.

Stage 3: Question(s)

The examination specifications state that one or more question(s) will be asked in stage 3. In 2017, each student was asked one question selected by the assessor(s) from a set of five. They were required to answer the question verbally. The questions were not published, but were consistent with advice given in the specifications.

Students should note the following:

- They are not to refer to notes or other materials when answering the question(s).
- The answer(s) they provide should be **consistent** with their response to stages 1 and 2 of the examination.
- They may ask for the question(s) to be repeated by the assessor(s) should this be necessary.
- They have up to two minutes to answer the question(s) verbally from the point at which they begin to answer.
- They should avoid repeating information previously given, if possible; for example, anything stated in the Framing Statement.
- The examination specifications document contains examples of the types of questions that could be used in the question(s) stage of the examination.

The 2017 monologues

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

Number	Monologue chosen	Acting and Direction (% of students)	Design (% of students)	Total (% of students)
1	Little Red Ridinghood	11.3	24.7	13.5
2	Valerie	11.6	3.8	10.3
3	Jane	9.3	3.8	8.3
4	Masha	13.3	2.7	11.6
5	The Wife	4.7	7.5	5.2
6	Desdemona	4.2	4.8	4.3
7	Jamie	5.6	3.8	5.3
8	Finbar	4.8	0.5	4.1
9	Charlie	9.6	8.1	9.3
10	Major	7.2	11.8	8.0
11	Scrooge	6.7	12.4	7.6
12	Iago	5.0	4.3	4.8
13	Messenger	3.9	6.5	4.3
14	Band and French Officer	2.8	5.4	3.2

Characteristics of high-scoring responses (for both Acting and Direction, and Design options)

Stage 1: Framing Statement

- delivery of a Framing Statement that clearly established the main artistic concepts to be communicated through the interpretation and the associated choices that were made.
- demonstrable evidence of research (both within and outside of the play) and how it was applied (analytical thinking), and the relationship between the monologue, scene and wider playscript. These choices allow students to demonstrate imagination and creative thinking.
- information was clearly and concisely delivered, including using theatrical terminology and expressions
- content that was highly consistent with that of the interpretation (stage 2)
- the transition into stage 2 was clearly signposted and well executed

Stage 2: Interpretation

- the interpretation was highly consistent with the directorial/design vision articulated in the Framing Statement (stage 1)
- the interpretation conveyed a strong understanding of the intended meaning(s) and context(s) of the play
- evidence that high-level research both within and outside of the playscript had been conducted and applied to the interpretation
- strongly conveyed/referenced theatrical style(s)
- strong, cohesive and clearly evident directorial **or** design vision
- well-conceived and well-executed directorial and acting **or** design choices
- re-contextualisation, or a change to the theatrical style(s) if applied, was appropriate to the monologue as well as the associated scene and the wider playscript
- a high level of understanding of the interrelationships between the selected area of stagecraft (Acting and Direction or Design), the actor and the audience
- a strong sense of the character's(s') role and function in the monologue and the wider play
- judiciously chosen, and effectively applied, materials to enhance the application of the selected stagecraft (Acting and Direction or Design)

Stage 3: Question(s)

- highly effective use of theatrical terminology and expressions
- a high level of consistency with the responses to stages 1 and 2
- the response directly addressed the specific facets of the question(s)