2021 VCE Drama written external assessment report

General comments

The 2021 Drama written examination required students to provide specific examples in response to the questions. When examples were required, the number was bolded (e.g. **one** or **two or more**), requiring students tocarefully adhere to the instructions of each task.

In Section B, both questions took students through a process that explored the dramatic potential of stimulus material to firstly develop an ensemble, and then a solo. It is important that students read and follow the process and logic of all aspects of the question before commencing writing, as Section B tasks were progressive. Many parts to the questions in Section B had spaces for students to fill in important aspects, such as stated performance styles, stimulus numbers, playmaking techniques, themes and conventions. This information and the choices made were intended to assist the student to clarify what they would be developing and writing about and also assist, when appropriate, in the marking of the response. Many students, having completed these details and made these choices, did not then refer to or use them in their responses.

Overall, the understanding and application of appropriate drama terminology was high, and students tended to apply such terminology well. However, some students did not demonstrate an understanding of evaluation or forgot to evaluate when required.

General examination techniques were applied well, although some students wasted valuable time rewriting questions rather than answering them concisely.

Students are reminded that they can continue to write in the area below the given lines in the examination paper, or in the provided space at the back. Students should feel comfortable using as much space on the page as needed and continue responding at the back of the examination when they have run out of space on the given page, clearly labelling if they have used the space at the back and which questions are being responded to in that extra space.

Specific information

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A

This section relates to Unit 3 analysis of a play.

Students were asked to respond to three questions about one play they attended in 2021.

*Jekyll and Hyde* was the most common production seen and written about. *Two Gents* and *The Mermaid* were also quite well represented. Many students attended *Man Up!*, but fewer students wrote about *Voyage* or *The Merger*.

Question 1a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 2 | 14 | 22 | 62 | 2.5 |

The majority of students answered this question with confidence. Focus seemed to be the most common performance skill chosen. Students who chose timing as the performance skill did not always answer the question with confidence.

A common error was students not identifying a performance skill correctly, instead often selecting an expressive skill. However, some students who could identify a performance skill and a moment then struggled to discuss how it was manipulated.

Question 1b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 3 | 4 | 25 | 32 | 21 | 14 | 3.1 |

The challenge in this question was to ensure the entire answer was an evaluation of how effective the application of the dramatic elements was in the performance. Most students did offer some evaluation, and most students did correctly address two dramatic elements. Responses that scored highly used a range of evaluative phrases and expressions. Some included critique of the application of the dramatic elements. It is important to remember that evaluation needs to include some description and analysis in order to determine effectiveness.

Students must address the command terms that are specific to a question.

Another common error was not addressing a specific moment in the play or addressing a different moment for each dramatic element. Responses that scored highly were able to discuss what the actor actually *did* when applying the dramatic elements and how this enhanced the performance, not just identify *when* the elements were applied.

Question 1c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Average |
| % | 3 | 1 | 4 | 13 | 24 | 21 | 21 | 13 | 4.7 |

The emphasis for this question was an analysis of the selected production area and its application in two specific moments within the chosen performance. The quality of the analysis was important.

Students answered this question well when writing about costume, lighting or set. Responses that scored highly were able to offer a detailed analysis of the effect, intended meaning and audience reaction, finding multiple meanings for the application of a production area, and providing clear examples.

Most students were able to correctly identify a production area and offer some analysis. However, a common error was not including specific moments in the performance they attended. A few students substituted a dramatic element for the production area. Others wrote about more than one production area.

As many students wrote on *Jekyll and Hyde*, some had difficulty identifying the specific moments to discuss in this question, especially if talking about the transformation into Hyde as this transformation occurred frequently.

Many students used evaluative comments in their response, which are encouraged, provided the analysis is strong. Unfortunately, many students responded as an evaluation and not an analysis as was required.

Section B

Question 1

In this question students were given a choice of five stimulus images and asked to consider the dramatic potential of one in devising an ensemble performance. Students were required to use the stimulus material to explore and communicate a specific theme to an audience, and some themes were suggested in the questions. Most students found the stimuli accessible and, through the progression of the questions, were able to develop their ideas and explore a selected theme.

Students were instructed that their devised performance may reflect one performance style and this style may be eclectic. They needed to consider how the ensemble would be created through applying playmaking techniques and select conventions appropriate to the selected style to create a specific and intentional impact upon an audience. Students were informed that the devised ensemble performance may be performed in any venue or space that supports the communication of the idea(s) and/or theme(s).

The question required students to draw from the knowledge and skills acquired in Unit 3. It allowed students to demonstrate their understanding of playmaking techniques, the manipulation of specific production areas and the application of conventions of their specific performance style to communicate a chosen theme. Students were also required to apply one dramatic element to transform time and apply expressive skills to manipulate the actor–audience relationship.

Students needed to ensure they had read and understood the entire question before commencing any response, to recognise how each part of the question may develop or connect with a previous part. Responses that scored highly clearly recognised the creative journey of devising that the question encouraged and made deep connections early with the potential in the stimulus.

Question 1a.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
| % | 1 | 5 | 94 | 2.0 |

The first part of the question asked students to identify only one idea that they would explore in the ensemble, and to say how this idea was linked to the selected image.

As is evident in the statistics, this was answered well by most students. Responses that did not score well provided one-word answers, which were very loosely related to the image. In a question such as this, which invited students to commence the creative process, students should be clear and definite in their responses to questions and resist qualifying their ideas with ‘perhaps’ or ‘maybe’.

Question 1b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 1 | 23 | 42 | 34 | 2.1 |

This question had three parts to it, asking students to describe how they would apply one playmaking technique to explore the application of one of the three production areas provided, to help create a sense of place. Lower-scoring responses indicated students needed to read more carefully what was required in each part of the question. Many students did not write down a selected playmaking technique to work with, but instead listed one of the production areas already provided.

Students generally used an appropriate playmaking technique, but did not always create a sense of place. Responses that scored highly listed the playmaking technique on the appropriate line and then were concise in describing how they would use this technique with one of the production areas listed to create a clear sense of place.

The production areas of sound design, theatre technologies and set pieces were equally popular. Some students thought they had to use all three production areas: sound design, theatre technologies and set design. Some students did not define or describe a sense of place. High-scoring responses clearly discussed sound as a production area, and did not confuse it with sound as a dramatic element.

There was confusion about theatre technologies, with several students writing about lighting, assuming that it is a theatre technology (which, in a technical sense, is correct). However, the study design lists theatre technologies as a separate category of production area to lighting and sound and, as such, generally refers to any technology used in the theatre that is not lighting and sound.

Question 1c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 2 | 3 | 14 | 29 | 25 | 17 | 10 | 3.6 |

Before starting the next part of the question, students were asked to state a theme they wanted their ensemble performance to be exploring. This could be one of the five given themes or one they chose themselves. This question asked that students analyse how they would communicate this theme using two or more stated conventions from the style they selected at the start of Section B, Question 1.

Overall, this was a well-answered question. Most students were able to identify a theme and a convention appropriate to their chosen style. Responses that scored highly clearly articulated how the ensemble would communicate their chosen theme and demonstrated clear understanding of what they intended the audience to understand or feel. High-scoring responses identified conventions suitable to the chosen performance style and demonstrated strong analytical skills.

Epic theatre was a very popular style and the conventions of direct address and narration were commonly applied. Lower-scoring responses demonstrated lack of awareness of the intended response an audience could have to the conventions of the Epic theatre style, especially the social and political purpose of conventions within this style.

Many students incorrectly associated Epic with conventions that are more appropriate to poor and eclectic theatre (e.g. transformations). Other conventions that were popular were use of song and dance and these were considered across a range of performance styles, not only with students who chose musical theatre as their style.

High-scoring responses discussed the application of production areas well, and also clearly understood actor–audience relationships and impact on audience. High-scoring responses also clearly linked the chosen theme to the performance style and conventions. Lower-scoring responses tended to select two very similar conventions (e.g. direct address and breaking the fourth wall). Some students focused on how they would use the convention, but forgot to discuss the theme, while others focused on the theme, but needed to discuss how they would use the conventions to illuminate that theme. This question involved analysis, and responses needed to move beyond only providing a narrative or story of the ensemble.

Question 1d.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 2 | 19 | 55 | 24 | 2.0 |

This part of the question asked students to explain how the ensemble would transform time using one dramatic element. This was generally done quite well; however, a common error was to not identify the ‘moment of transformation in time’. Responses that scored highly identified an element that was helpful in establishing that moment of transformation in time and many students used contrast or mood as their dramatic element.

High-scoring responses clearly articulated how the scenes would contrast with each other and were specific in indicating when the moment was and how the transformation would occur. Lower-scoring responses did not discuss a moment of transformation. Students are advised to be clear in their explanation. Often it was difficult to know how an audience would know time was transformed; for example, using the production area of lighting and providing a contrast from bright to dim is a good choice but does not on its own mean the audience will know the ensemble has transformed 100 years into the future.

Question 1e.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 3 | 8 | 30 | 38 | 21 | 2.7 |

In this final part of Section B, Question 1, students were asked to explain how the ensemble would manipulate the actor–audience relationship in the final moment. The ensemble had to deliberately manipulate the audience’s mood, emotions and response to the action, using one or more expressive skills.

Responses that scored highly gave a clear sense of what was happening in the performance, with a clear understanding of how they intended to manipulate the audience response, ensuring they acknowledged the intention of the impact. Higher-scoring responses had a clear vision of what the final moment would be and explained clearly how the actors would manipulate the audience using their expressive skills.

Overall, this was quite a well-answered question. Students were able to identify how expressive skills would impact the actor–audience relationship, although some responses weren’t specific enough in relation to a ‘final’ moment. Some students left out the ‘how’ aspect of the question, often providing too general a description and not explaining how the audience would understand the idea.

Lower-scoring responses were those where students had difficulty explaining how actors manipulate the actor–audience relationship using expressive skills. Many responses focused on one expressive skill, but many chose to focus on two; very few selected more than two expressive skills. Lower-scoring responses did not correctly explain the use of expressive skills. For example, the expressive skill of ‘voice’ was often selected, but the response confused the actor’s use of words as being a manipulation of voice.

Higher-scoring responses clearly described a final moment and explained how they wanted to leave their audience feeling.

Question 2

In considering Section B, Question 2, students were provided with the full range of Mr Men and Little Miss characters as stimuli from which to create a solo performance featuring two contrasting characters from this collection. The question provided students with the linear process of devising the characters through the application of playmaking techniques, the transformation process, the use of performance and expressive skills, and invited students to consider how they would convey a moral message using selected and appropriate conventions. The performance was required to be devised for a specific stated audience.

Students were required to draw upon the key knowledge and skills in Unit 4, where they are asked to develop and evaluate their own solo performance. To best respond to all these questions comprehensively, students needed to read the entire question and appreciate the progression of activities and idea development within each part.

As with Section B, Question 1, students needed to consider the whole question as an entirety before responding. Responses that scored highly demonstrated that students had taken time to consider the stimulus choices carefully and provided themselves with solid ideas for characters as well as logical and appropriate performance styles and conventions to address each question with clarity and detail.

Most students chose an audience of primary school or kindergarten students, while a few chose an audience of their peers.

Question 2a.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
| % | 2 | 4 | 94 | 1.9 |

Students were instructed to use the playmaking technique of brainstorming, using a table to consider features and corresponding ideas from the range of characters provided in the stimulus. This process offered a level of complexity; however, students managed it well and engaged with the task to examine the stimuli and draw links between the features of the illustrations to the ideas that could inform the performance.

Most students included features and ideas in all eight boxes. Most students put one or two words in each box. Students should note that this question was worth only two marks and was, as a brainstorming activity, only the first part of the devising process.

Question 2b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 2 | 7 | 29 | 34 | 19 | 9 | 2.9 |

This question invited students to select the two contrasting characters and explain how they would use a playmaking technique to explore the application of symbol to develop a clear contrast between the characters.

This proved to be a challenging question with three aspects to the task: selecting a playmaking technique, exploring application of symbol and demonstrating a clear contrast between characters. Lower-scoring responses did not address all aspects of the question, with the majority of student responses able to identify how a playmaking technique could be used to create a clear contrast between characters, but application of symbol was not given focus or was only superficially addressed. Students needed to clearly explain how symbol was applied and consider how it could be communicated. Merely saying something is symbolic isn’t sufficient. Often there was confusion between prop and symbol.

Most students were able to understand and discuss contrast between the two characters; however, the characteristics of the characters weren’t always clearly explored. Responses that scored highly referred to expressive skills in the development work and clearly explained how the actor would make use of a playmaking technique in the exploration of applying symbol.

Question 2c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 2 | 4 | 37 | 34 | 23 | 2.7 |

In this question students were asked to analyse how the actor would transform between the characters making use of the expressive skill of voice and the performance skill of energy.

Higher-scoring responses gave a clear description of how the actor would use energy and voice in a specific transformation moment and explained why.

Lower-scoring responses did not clearly identify a dramatic moment. Most students addressed voice and energy (with voice being better answered than energy) in a discussion of the differences between the characters, but many were not able to address the moment of transformation. Some students read this question as *either* energy or voice.

Question 2d.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 7 | 5 | 13 | 29 | 22 | 15 | 8 | 3.4 |

In the final question students needed to state a moral lesson they wished to convey to the specific audience they had identified in a dramatic moment in the performance. Students were asked to select two appropriate conventions to apply in this moment to help convey the lesson. The conventions could not be transformation of character, time or play or application of symbol.

Students were then asked to analyse how the two selected conventions would be appropriate and how they would manipulate these conventions to best ensure the audience understood the lesson.

The structure of this question made use of bullet points to guide students in their analysis.

High-scoring responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the link between the moral lesson and their audience and understood how the selected conventions would provide this link. Song (with audience participation) appeared as a popular convention.

Lower-scoring responses did not address the appropriateness of the convention or explain why it was appropriate for this dramatic moment in the solo. Higher-scoring responses provided good detail, particularly in relation to how the actor would be manipulating the convention, and also considered the audience, referred to them and how their selected conventions and moral lesson were appropriate for that chosen audience.