



GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2006 Drama solo performance examination contained 10 prescribed structures which provided a broad range of characters, were consistently complex, and required considerable research.

Students who were successful:

- fully addressed every requirement in the performance focus
- presented performances clearly shaped by thorough and carefully edited research
- clearly demonstrated skills in the non-naturalistic performance style
- appropriately interwove both theatrical conventions into their performance
- theatrically highlighted their work with both dramatic elements prescribed in the structure.

Weaker work was characterised by:

- too much talking and not enough dramatic action
- details missing from the performance focus, including plurals and/or part of a dot point requiring two separate pieces of information
- a lack of research and editing
- a naturalistic performance style
- minimal use of the theatrical conventions and dramatic elements prescribed in the structure.

It is important to note that where specific details of the prescribed structure were omitted, students could not score full marks for criterion 1. **If students do not score full marks for criterion 1, they cannot score full marks for any other criterion.**

The issues of timing, performing to a specified audience and the use of props were all handled better this year; however, telling or narrating the story was a problem for some students. Teachers should discourage this approach with their students. Dramatic action needs to happen in the 'now', and narrating or describing the dramatic action, rather than doing it, does not address the requirement of performing in a non-naturalistic style. Dramatic action should not be described; it should happen without an accompanying narrative. Students should not **tell** the assessors what they're seeing or about to see; they should **act** it.

Weaker students presented far too much conversational dialogue and not enough re-creation. The terminology section on page 14 of the examination paper stated that 'the emphasis in the re-creation must be on action rather than narration; doing rather than telling'. This lack of understanding of non-naturalism had a direct impact on the assessment of the use of expressive skills (criterion 8), the development of the dramatic potential of the subject matter (criterion 2) and the use of the prescribed performance style (criterion 4).

Again, as in past years, better work was characterised by a comprehensive level of detail obtained through extensive research. Teachers should encourage students to generate a sufficient amount of raw material as they prepare for their solo performance so that they can judiciously edit and shape it into a maximum seven minutes of effective dramatic action. Careful editing helps to avoid repetition. It also helps with the pacing of the performance and the creation of dramatic tension (criterion 11).

Costume choice is still an issue which needs to be addressed by some students. Students should be aware that:

- street clothes are inappropriate
- unnecessarily exposed flesh is inappropriate
- theatre blacks, on their own, are of limited value.

Teachers need to remind students that costume is part of application of stagecraft (criterion 7).

Teachers and students should note that a revised Drama study is being implemented in 2007. Information about the conditions, criteria and other requirements for the 2007 Drama Solo performance examination can be found on the VCAA website <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au>.



SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The characters

Doctor Watson

The best work was characterised by:

- an imaginative connection between the case of 'The Exploding Snuff Box' and The Gunpowder Plot of 1605
- selective and appropriate references to 20th century forensics
- excellent transformations of object and character, including the transitions
- Watson maintaining his 'attempt to prove to Holmes' throughout the performance.

Weaker students:

- did not create any sense of the world of Doctor Watson
- executed clumsy transformations, often using the same repetitive transformational device
- failed to clearly establish a connection between the case of 'The Exploding Snuff Box' and The Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

Mary Mallon

The best work was characterised by:

- inventive and entertaining use of song
- clever references to social and political issues through cabaret
- excellent shifts in time, and good choice of the pandemics occurring between 1940 and 2006
- the building of the 'relentless' pursuit throughout the performance and culminating in a climax.

Weaker students:

- overly used dance without demonstrating an understanding of cabaret
- presented 'show tunes' with little social or political comment
- struggled to establish the 'prophetic prediction' and failed to examine the issues preventing effective control of the pandemics.

The Gossip

The best work was characterised by:

- clever use of satire
- effective and visually stimulating use of symbol
- well chosen references to the world of Catherine the Great and global influences pressing upon Russia
- an inventive and often comic interpretation of the Gossip.

Weaker students:

- did not establish the personality or motivation of the Gossip
- referred to social achievements without any connection to the politics of the court or the world beyond Russia's borders
- struggled to shift to the 'uncovered plot' and deal effectively with the examples of how the plotters were thwarted.

Violet Baudelaire

The best work was characterised by:

- strong understanding and use of black comedy
- sophisticated and effective use of pathos
- solid research into India and an inventive link between Gandhi and British rule
- a dramatic realisation of the writing style of Lemony Snicket.

Weaker students:

- did a lot of 'ribbon tying' and referred more to the film than to the text
- made scant reference to Gandhi and the social and political issues associated with British rule
- struggled to understand and demonstrate the requirements of pathos and black comedy.

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The Accused

The best work was characterised by:

- thoughtful choice and clever use of the montage of images and vignettes in dot point one
- sophisticated use of heightened language
- creation of an effective mood, and judicious use of Arthur Miller's text
- excellent shifts between the different time frames.

Weaker students:

- reproduced far too much text from the play
- showed little understanding of the Puritan lifestyle
- struggled to demonstrate a heightened use of language or an effective use of pathos.

The Detective

The best work was characterised by

- a coherent performance, which was both layered and complex
- great use of symbol
- an excellent sense of the world of Appleyard College created through heightened language
- effortless shifts between the different time frames.

Weaker students:

- did not demonstrate any sense of the time or the place
- used far too much talking and showed too little evidence of research into modern detection methods
- did not have the Detective as the central focus.

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

The best work was characterised by:

- a highly physical as well as efficient demonstration of the montage of images of the world of London
- seamless transformations of characters, including the transitions
- sophisticated use of stagecraft
- skilfully interwoven dramatic parallels between Jekyll and Hyde and Brodie.

Weaker students:

- failed to demonstrate the 'fatal flaw' or the connection with William Brodie
- struggled with the constant transformations, often choosing poor devices to create them
- lacked coherence in their work, which was very confusing.

The Pirate

The best work was characterised by:

- excellent comic timing and effective imitation, especially with accent
- a highly physical performance with great use of transformation of object, including the transitions
- considerable research into the Aztecs
- imaginative links to piracy in modern times.

Weaker students:

- failed to move beyond fairly static storytelling with lots of drunk pirates
- tended to copy the film and made little attempt to explore the dramatic potential of the impact of Cortez on the Aztecs
- used obvious and fairly pedestrian references to piracy in modern times.

Wu Zetian

The best work was characterised by:

- detailed research into Peking Opera and a sensitive demonstration of its conventions
- beautifully crafted use of sound and symbol
- highly effective use of stagecraft
- innovative choices in representing the spirit of the Qianling Tomb in dot point three.

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Weaker students:

- showed little evidence of research into the world of the Empress
- made poor choices in the use of stagecraft
- failed to effectively explore the montage of images as required in dot point three.

The Spirit of the North American Wild West

The best work was characterised by:

- a highly physical performance with great use of stereotype or 'stock' characters
- a skilful interweaving of song with a highly political flavour
- an excellent understanding and demonstration of the conventions of Western Film
- innovative choices in exploring the 'hardships' as well as Cody's 'contribution to' and 'vision for' the future.

Weaker students:

- did not manage to create a sense of The Spirit, but spent most of the time as cowboys
- failed to show an understanding of the required performance style
- used too many words, and did not address the required examples in dot points two and three.