



GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2007 Drama solo performance examination contained 10 prescribed structures that provided a range of complex and challenging characters.

Students who were successful:

- paid close attention to the reaccredited *Drama VCE Study Design*
- took careful note of every word in the prescribed structure
- demonstrated comprehensive research
- included skillful editing
- performed in a non-naturalistic style
- clearly established the 'audience' throughout their performance
- thoroughly addressed each dot point but did not try to give equal weighting to each dot point.

Weaker work was characterised by:

- too much talking
- a lack of dramatic action
- no reference to the stem in the performance focus
- omission of details from the dot points
- a lack of research
- little evidence of editing
- a naturalistic performance style.

It is critical for teachers and students to note that if **any** part of the prescribed structure is omitted, students cannot 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 either.

Students need to be reminded that, in addition to the two prescribed theatrical conventions listed with each prescribed structure, the following four theatrical conventions **must** be demonstrated throughout their performance:

- disjointed time sequences
- transformation of character
- transformation of place
- transformation of object.

The issue of telling or narrating the story continues to be a problem for some students. Teachers should encourage students to find dramatic, non-verbal, solutions to providing information. For example:

- don't tell the assessors what they're seeing or about to see; act it
- don't describe what is being acted.

Presenting work as a 'talking head' indicated a lack of understanding of non-naturalism and had a direct impact on the assessment of criterion 4, 'Use of performance style(s) prescribed in the structure', and criterion 10, 'Use of expressive skills'.

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 of seven minutes of effective dramatic action. Careful editing helps to avoid repetition. It also helps with pacing the performance and creating dramatic tension, which is assessed through criterion 8.

Costume choice continues to be problematic for some students. Students should remember that costume is part of application of stagecraft (criterion 9) and that theatre blacks, on their own, are of limited value. In addition, students should **not**:

- wear street clothes, school uniforms or T-shirts turned inside out
- wear jewellery that is inappropriate for the character
- expose flesh unnecessarily.



SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The Characters

Florence Broadhurst

The best work:

- captured a sense of the outrageous quality in Florence's personality
- clearly linked her overseas experiences with her designs
- portrayed the psychological complexity of the woman as well as her internal conflicts
- made excellent use of colour and symbol
- cleverly wove in the mysteries of, and 'possible motives' for, her murder.

Weaker work:

- told the story in a chronological order
- had no sense of Florence's age or the time in which she lived
- failed to demonstrate pathos
- was characterised by an over-use of props.

The Migrant

The best work:

- effectively referenced Shaun Tan's artwork throughout
- created a sense of belief in the 'claim for family residency'
- skilfully used stillness and silence to enhance dramatic tension
- demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of bureaucracy
- presented a carefully edited performance text.

Weaker work:

- failed to demonstrate an understanding and use of the stimulus
- did not capture the essence of 'being a "stranger in a strange land"'
- contained little research into the changes resulting from the 'shifts in immigration policy'
- struggled to establish the 'panel from the Department of Immigration'.

The Spirit of Australian Suburbia

The best work:

- created a strong sense of 'the Spirit'
- made sophisticated links between Arkley's art and suburbia
- skilfully used caricature to explore 'stereotypes' of Australian characters as well as 'representatives from different countries'
- was particularly inventive with 'aspects of Soap Opera'
- used props well, especially picture frames.

Weaker work:

- did not reference the art of Howard Arkley or the 48th Venice Biennale
- failed to contrast suburbia with the 'Australian bush ideal'
- over-worked Soap Opera so that timing became a problem
- struggled to find an appropriate 'environmental issue' and link it to 'bringing up children'.

Eliza Doolittle or Alfred Doolittle

The best work:

- contained a combination of high energy singing, dancing and acting appropriate to the 'Musical Theatre' style
- cleverly demonstrated comedy through the re-writing of lyrics in recognisable musical theatre songs
- showed a rich understanding of the social issues of the time
- appropriately re-created the language of the era
- demonstrated intelligent choices in the use of costume and symbol.

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Weaker work:

- did not understand or demonstrate 'aspects of Musical Theatre'
- relied too heavily on reproducing scenes from the film
- struggled to re-create a sense of the era
- made poor language choices.

Solebum

The best work:

- was magnificently physical and convincingly cat-like
- confidently and innovatively used space
- effortlessly made links between the 'evolution of the werecats' powers' and 'the goddess Bast'
- beautifully captured the 'heightened use of language' with rhyming verse
- contained excellent object transformations to enhance the 'Magic Realism'.

Weaker work:

- was far too wordy
- made no connection between werecats and Egypt
- failed to address the 'importance of magical creatures in the journey of human self-discovery'
- struggled to demonstrate performance energy.

Eva Smith

The best work:

- resonated with dense research, and was both layered and complex in performance
- made seamless and dramatic references to 'momentous events'
- created an excellent sense of the era through the use of language, costume and period props
- re-created the fighting spirit in Eva rather than portraying her as a weak character
- effectively explored social commentary through the application of satire.

Weaker work:

- did not demonstrate any sense of Eva's strength of character
- was far too wordy and had little in the way of re-creation
- lost sight of the need to establish an 'interviewing committee' and the desperation in Eva
- struggled to create a vision which examined 'the social changes in England between the 1910s and the 1940s'.

Announcer Two

The best work:

- contained excellent examples of the conventions of 'Radio Plays'
- demonstrated highly sophisticated use of stagecraft, particularly the multi-transformational use of props
- presented seamless transformations of characters employing vocal dexterity and convincing accents
- made excellent references to the stimulus
- was characterised by solid research into, and dramatic resolution of, the 'propaganda technique known as the "Big Lie"'.

Weaker work:

- contained a limited use of live sound effects and limited understanding of 'Radio Plays'
- struggled to re-create the era and master accents
- lacked coherence and was very confusing
- failed to establish a 'Broadcasting Tribunal', or to address dot point three.

Detective Sergeant Mary Mary

The best work:

- demonstrated excellent understanding and use of rhythm
- beautifully crafted the world of the nursery rhyme characters through research and attention to detail
- cleverly established a 'film noir' feel through language and timing
- was very inventive in the use of props and sound
- contained sophisticated political comment and wonderfully appropriate slapstick humour.

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Weaker work:

- was characterised by a 'talking head' with little or no dramatic action
- struggled to create any 'links between Quang Tech, Jack and Jill, and the French Revolution'
- failed to create a 'climax'
- did not establish the audience, Josh Hatchett, or effectively address 'the political life of a current world leader' as required by dot point three.

The Screen Writer

The best work:

- contained excellent expressive skills, particularly in establishing persuasive qualities
- was beautifully lyrical and symbolic in the re-creation of Chuyia's world
- demonstrated innovative 'storyboarding' techniques
- had a performance energy which helped to create the contrasting characters and the links between them
- presented thoughtful and thought-provoking references to 'censorship in the arts'.

Weaker work:

- did not capture the world of India or create a sense of the era
- failed to explore the dramatic potential of the character Chuyia in 'the new film'
- lacked development of the character of the Screen Writer
- failed to effectively explore the 'examples of controversy' as required by dot point three.

Soraya

The best work:

- created an Afghan experience which sensitively explored loss, pain and hope
- made superb use of stillness and silence to build dramatic tension
- contained an excellent application of 'heightened use of language', particularly in the style of the stimulus
- conveyed great power in the selective use of dramatic metaphor
- demonstrated highly effective 'contrast' between the Afghan experience and the Australian experience.

Weaker work:

- did not manage to create a sense of 'the Melbourne Writers' Festival in 2030'
- failed to establish 'a parallel' between the Ebony Horse and Soraya
- was unable to demonstrate a newly created fable showing changes in Afghanistan 'since the 1990s' as required by dot point three.