



GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2011 Drama solo performance examination contained nine prescribed structures that provided a broad range of characters for students to develop from a wide selection of stimuli.

Students who were successful:

- fully addressed the requirements of the prescribed structure
- ensured dramatic action far outweighed talking
- made substantial and appropriate reference to the stimulus material
- extensively researched and tightly edited their work
- ensured that the prescribed character occupied the majority of the performance time
- made creative choices in their use of stagecraft.

Weaker work was characterised by:

- a naturalistic performance style
- too much talking and a lack of dramatic action
- poor or no use of stagecraft
- little or no reference to the stem in the performance focus
- omission of parts of the dot points
- a lack of research and/or little or no reference to the stimulus material.

A characteristic of non-naturalistic performance styles is that the dramatic action should happen without a commentary. There is no need to describe what is happening. Students should find dramatic, **non-verbal** solutions to providing information.

Better work was characterised by extensive detail obtained from thorough research. Students need to generate a sufficient amount of raw material as they prepare for their solo performance so that they can 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 in criterion 8.

Students need to be reminded that, in addition to the prescribed theatrical convention 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 and transformation of object. It is important to remember that the use of these conventions should enhance the dramatic meaning of the performance. They should not merely be included because they are prescribed. This is particularly noteworthy with respect to the choice of object and the ease with which it can be transformed. Students need to find an object that is appropriate for their character.

The choice of costume requires careful consideration as the wrong choice has the potential to undermine belief in the character(s) being performed. Teachers and students need to note that 'theatre blacks', on their own, are not necessarily the best option. Efficient costume changes can be achieved with selective use of items that enhance meaning through their symbolic value.

Students should **not**:

- wear street clothes, school uniforms or T-shirts turned inside out, unless this choice is specifically appropriate for the character(s) they are performing
- wear jewellery or make-up that is inappropriate for the character(s) they are performing
- dress inappropriately.

It is critical for teachers and students to remember 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. Analysis of the structure should be part of initial planning for the performance and, as the performance is developed, edited and refined, care should be taken that requirements of each dot point are being met in obvious and dramatically appropriate ways.



SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The characters

The Sheriff of Nottingham

The best work:

- demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the stimulus by presenting a performance that resonated with stylistic choices found in the 'graphic novel', such as strong, bold, dramatic images; exaggerated facial expressions and gestures; and emphatic and declamatory dialogue
- skilfully used key historical references and language to place the character appropriately in time and place
- demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of satire
- showed a clear understanding of the role of a PR manager
- cleverly integrated energetic and sharp transformations.

Weaker work:

- contained little or no reference to the nature of the stimulus
- made poor choices with language
- relied on popular and inappropriate versions of the Robin Hood legend
- failed to make reference to a PR manager or misunderstood the role of a PR manager, presenting a character unrelated to the field of public relations, or a character that had no connection to the letters 'p' and 'r'.

Modesty Blaise

The best work:

- contained strong references to the stimulus that demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the stylistic elements found in the 'comic strip', such as powerful moments captured by dramatic, abbreviated images; exploration of a two-dimensional quality; and a use of the colours black and white, both in moral terms and in the choice of costume and props
- successfully incorporated the use of the freeze-frame convention
- skilfully used vocal accents and heightened language to establish the era
- demonstrated clever manipulation of dramatic timing
- presented layers of symbolism within the performance, including an awareness of the irony of Modesty's name.

Weaker work:

- showed little understanding of the style of the stimulus
- made clumsy use of stagecraft, such as the choice of a costume that restricted movement, or the changing of a costume during performance that affected dramatic timing in a negative way; and the poor choice and/or use of props that interfered with transformation of character, as well as transformation of time and place
- failed to find dramatic ways of representing the era
- struggled to explore changes in espionage methods 'from the 1960s to the 2000s'.

Vincent Anton Freeman

The best work:

- contained text that showed a clear understanding of the complex themes in the stimulus
- paid close attention to the precise movements and physical characteristics of the characters
- used costume and props well, to assist with transformations
- presented an energetic rather than introspective performance and skilfully manipulated dramatic timing
- sensitively and appropriately responded to the requirement to explore 'discrimination based on genetic factors'.

Weaker work:

- relied too heavily upon recreated moments from the film
- demonstrated poor expressive skills and poor performance energy
- contained poor use of stagecraft
- contained too much talking and lacked dramatic action.

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Zhu Xiao-Mei

The best work:

- presented a lyrical and sophisticated physicalisation of ideas
- cleverly used stillness and silence to create dramatic tension and mood
- contained highly effective use of symbol and heightened language; especially minimal use of dialogue – information was shown rather than told
- demonstrated a strong understanding of the sense of loss and the overcoming of that loss
- integrated an appropriate selection of ‘another world-renowned artist’.

Weaker work:

- presented narration as a substitute for dramatic action
- overly relied upon dance within the performance
- contained very low performance energies
- lacked research and sophistication.

The Household Appliance

The best work:

- was highly energetic, demonstrating intense, comedic use of physical theatre
- presented an appliance that was a constant, recognisable presence who saw itself as part of the family
- made exceptional use of vocal sounds
- demonstrated a clear awareness of the impending doom at the heart of the performance focus
- contained excellent manipulation of stagecraft.

Weaker work:

- focussed more on a human talking about an appliance
- failed to understand the sense of impending doom
- presented very little information about the ‘impact on family life’
- lacked any exploration of ‘planned obsolescence’.

The King of Horror

The best work:

- resonated with a clear understanding of Gothic horror
- contained excellent research, and sustained the central character throughout the performance
- made effective use of accents
- skilfully explored the complexity and torment of the character
- cleverly integrated a sensitive and appropriate response to ‘the real “monsters” in their midst’.

Weaker work:

- struggled to establish a clear central character, often shifting between Karloff and Lugosi
- made poor editing choices so that the strands within the structure became confusing
- showed little evidence of research into the performance style, presenting the ‘Addams Family’ rather than Gothic horror
- had little or no understanding of comparisons with people in the twenty-first century.

Elizabeth Bennet

The best work:

- successfully showed a clear understanding of the parody of Jane Austin’s novel contained in the stimulus
- demonstrated highly effective transformations between the contemplative Elizabeth, martial-arts Elizabeth and the twenty-first century Liz
- selectively and appropriately referenced the eras through language and stagecraft
- incorporated excellent use of exaggerated movement, combining restrained, feminine, subtle but still energetic movement in the battle scenes
- effortlessly linked Melbourne’s office dwellers to the stereotypical zombie.

Weaker work:

- played the character as a vengeful ‘Hollywood’ zombie hunter
- struggled to make sense of the text

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- demonstrated poor use of space and poor focus – too much running around
- failed to understand or dramatically explore the notion of ‘white-collar zombies’.

Baldrick

The best work:

- skilfully incorporated an awareness of imminent death within the exploration of ‘life in the trenches’
- contained sophisticated character transformations
- introduced new jokes rather than old ones and used dramatic action rather than telling
- made clever and appropriate links to eighteenth-century NSW
- clearly researched and edited the selection and portrayal of a ‘lunatic general’.

Weaker work:

- was characterised by a poor choice and use of props
- relied on recreating an impersonation from the television series rather than creating a character; a series of gags without the farce
- presented very tenuous links to Bligh and NSW
- contained little or no understanding of the realities of trench life on the Western Front.

The Diva

The best work:

- contained strong performance focus and strong performance energy and great vocal control – with the ability to sing well and badly
- presented an excellent sense of the character with an awareness of the true nature of her success and tongue-in-cheek promotion of her qualities
- demonstrated a clear understanding of social aspects of the era
- clearly understood and explored the meaning of being an ‘entrepreneur’
- presented an appropriate comparison with a ‘future female celebrity’.

Weaker work:

- contained no sense of Florence as a comic character
- relied on an over-emphasis of costume, accent and way too much singing – often to the detriment of meaning
- failed to demonstrate research and an understanding of the era
- presented an inappropriate choice of person as being both ‘entertainer and entrepreneur’.