

2020 VCE Theatre Studies monologue examination report

General comments

In 2020 the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority produced an examination based on the *VCE Theatre Studies Adjusted Study Design for 2020 only*.

The Theatre Studies monologue examination (its preparation and execution) requires students to think analytically, imaginatively and creatively. There are specific requirements for interpreting the monologue, whether the student chooses the option of acting and directing or that of designing (any two of costume, set, properties, sound, lighting or make-up). 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. Additionally, the examination gives instructions as to which lines of dialogue and which stage directions 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.

In 2020 students who chose the acting and directing option were required to demonstrate their knowledge and skills working in these two production roles. Students who chose the designing option were to design for a solo actor performing the monologue under examination conditions.

In 2020 the Theatre Studies monologue examination comprised 10 monologue choices covering a range of scripts, theatre styles, forms, contexts, themes and cultural origins. Students chose one monologue from the prescribed list. In 2020 some monologues were reproduced in their entirety (as they appeared in the original script), while others were formed by cutting and pasting passages from one or more parts of the script to form the monologue, thus allowing students to address the challenge of shifts in time, persons, places and character development that this requires.

Re-contextualisation of the monologue (that is, changing details such as the time period, given circumstances and/or setting of the original script) was permissible for this task. However, students should note that any re-contextualisation decisions for the monologue should also be appropriate for the scene in which the monologue is embedded, and for the script as a whole, and should still convey its intended meanings. Students could also change the theatre style(s) of the monologue and, if so, the same considerations (above) should apply.

Students should be aware that the rooms used for the examination are not necessarily dedicated theatre performance spaces and that their dimensions, acoustics and lighting conditions may vary. Students should plan for their interpretation to be flexible enough for a variety of room sizes, acoustics, lighting conditions and floor coverings, including carpet. In 2020 students were required to present their monologue interpretation in a 5m x 5m space, which was delineated in the examination room. Designers were required to design for a performance space of that size, not a larger sized stage area. Students were permitted to set up lighting, sound and other materials outside the area, but lighting, sound and audiovisual equipment had to be operated from within the designated space. Students should be aware that some venues have standard-sized doors/doorways (some venues have a single, not double, doorway) and that items to be used for the examination need to fit through this opening (height and width). It is advised that students make judicious

decisions about the materials/items they bring into, and set up in, the room. Students should note that they have a maximum of two minutes to set up their materials before commencing the examination and that they should bring materials into and out of the room unassisted. All electrical equipment was required to be tested and tagged, including extension cords. Students were permitted to bring a data projector, laptop, an MP3 player, a mobile phone, a tablet or other such portable electronic device into the examination room. Recording functions on any electronic devices/equipment had to be disabled during the examination. Where a laptop was used, the student was required to direct the screen of the device towards the assessors, and students were not permitted to access the internet during the examination. A mobile phone or other smart device such as a tablet was permitted in the examination room if it was to be used as a prop or as an audio-video playback device. The messaging and Wi-Fi functions of the device had to be disabled before the student entered the room.

For students choosing the acting and directing option:

- They should ensure that, as well as acting, they demonstrate their application of directing to interpret the monologue; both are assessed.
- It is a requirement of the examination that students convey a theatre style(s) and that it be consistently applied throughout their performance.
- Students will not be prompted. If a student forgets their lines, they should pick up the monologue where they can and continue with their performance.
- While it is not obligatory, most students may accompany their acting interpretation with materials and technology such as costume(s), props, set, lighting and sound.

For students choosing the designing option:

- According to the examination specifications, students are to design for an actor (one actor only) performing the monologue (but not for the wider scene or the whole play) to an intended audience within a single clearly lit space, and within the designated performance space of 5m x 5m (that is, the designer should present their interpretation within the space and should design for an actor as if performing the monologue with the same-sized space). It is important that designers work within these parameters.
- In the examination specifications document, there are specific instructions regarding what designers should include in their interpretation. Students are advised to adhere to these requirements.
- Designers should be mindful that any symbolic intentions conveyed in their design should be clearly evident to and understood by an audience watching the performance.
- The designs should complement the work of an actor performing the monologue but should not overly direct or dictate the actor's movements or character interpretation.

The first assessment criterion is quantitative rather than qualitative – it assesses whether the student has met the requirements of the task, rather than how well the monologue was interpreted. To achieve full marks for Criterion 1, students needed to adhere to all of the requirements of the chosen area (acting and directing, or designing) as outlined in the VCE Theatre Studies performance examination specifications.

In 2020 the examination was divided into two stages: Stage 1 – Interpretation and Stage 2 – Interpretation Statement. Students had a total of eight minutes to complete both sections, including transitioning from one to the other.

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.

Stage 1 – Interpretation

Most students followed the examination specifications with regard to the interpretation stage of the examination. Common errors for acting and directing included memorisation of lines and little evidence of choosing and applying specific element(s) of theatre composition. Common errors for designing included designs that were impractical for an acting interpretation of the monologue or that would overshadow the application of acting and directing.

In preparing for Stage 1, students should ensure that their interpretation contains all of the required elements in accordance with the specifications for this examination and that all of the criteria for the examination be addressed. For example, the application of theatre styles is a criterion that was not adequately addressed by some students.

Stage 2 – Interpretation Statement

The examination concluded with students delivering an oral interpretation statement. They were permitted to read from notes written on or attached to the interpretation statement form, which was part of the examination and which they were allowed to bring into the examination room. Students should be mindful that assessors base their assessment on what is said, not what is written on the form, so it is important that students not rush the delivery of their oral interpretation statement. Following the oral presentation, a single hard copy of the interpretation statement was handed to the assessors. Some students memorised their oral interpretation statement, which was permissible. Some students did not justify their interpretation decisions, which adversely affected their result for Criterion 10.

Transition between Interpretation and Interpretation Statement

It was the student's responsibility, without instruction by the assessors, to move from the interpretation (Stage 1) to the oral interpretation statement (Stage 2); this transition time was part of the time permitted for Stages 1 and 2 combined. Some students took a short break after Stage 1 to prepare themselves for Stage 2. This break was permissible but was included as part of the eight minutes of total time for the delivery of parts one and two of the examination.

The 2020 monologues

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

Character number	Monologue chosen	Total % of students
1	Witch	17.70
2	Grace	10.12
3	Nurse	7.05
4	Hattie	15.50
5	Jack	10.75
6	Frank	5.41
7	Teddy	3.87
8	Tommo	10.52
9	Stage Manager	6.61

Character number	Monologue chosen	Total % of students
10	Narrator	12.47

In 2020 81.15 per cent of students selected the acting and directing option, and 18.85 per cent selected the designing option.

The following were characteristics of high-scoring responses:

- The interpretation (Stage 1) was highly consistent with the directorial/design vision articulated in the oral interpretation statement (Stage 2).
- The interpretation was creative and imaginative in its vision, planning and execution.
- The interpretation conveyed a strong understanding of the intended meaning(s), the plot, themes and context(s) of the play and its structure.
- There was evidence of high-level dramaturgical research, both within and outside the script (analytical thinking), having been conducted and applied to the interpretation.
- There were strongly conveyed/referenced theatre style(s).
- There was a strong, cohesive and clearly evident directorial or design vision.
- There were well-conceived and well-executed directorial and acting or design choices.
- The selected element(s) of theatre composition were applied and their use referenced in the oral interpretation statement.
- There was a high level of understanding of the interrelationships between the selected production role (acting and directing, or designing), the actor and the intended audience.
- A strong sense of the character's(s') role and function in the monologue and the wider play was evident.
- Materials were judiciously chosen and effectively applied to enhance the application of the selected production role (acting and directing or designing).
- Information was clearly and concisely delivered, including the use of a range of theatrical terminology and expressions.

The following were characteristics of lower-scoring responses:

- Very limited application of selected production roles was evident.
- A superficial understanding of the monologue/scene and whole script was evident.
- There was very limited evidence of application of dramaturgy.
- There was little understanding and demonstration of theatre style(s).
- There was little understanding of the elements of theatre composition, with no explanation as to why these were being used, their intended impact and their effect on the interpretation by the intended audience.
- There was limited evidence that the interpretation was planned for a 5m x 5m performance space.
- There was little understanding of the intended audience and the effect their interpretation might have upon it.
- The oral interpretation statement was brief and/or described the student's interpretation process rather than justified it.