



GENERAL COMMENTS

In general, students who understood the underlying concepts of the *Theatre Studies VCE Study Design* handled the examination well. There was a total of 45 marks available for the paper, and most students answered all of the questions on the paper. Students were able to support their written answers with illustrations, and some took advantage of this option.

Students and teachers should note that a revised study design will be implemented in 2007 and that aspects of the written examination will be different. Specifications and sample material for the 2007 examination are available on the VCAA website <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au>.

Areas of strength and weakness

High-scoring papers demonstrated:

- an understanding of all of the key knowledge and key skills within the study design
- understanding and appropriate use of subject specific terminology
- skill in analysing performance styles associated with play(s) or excerpt(s) the student had attended and/or had taken part in during the year
- a sound working knowledge of two of the following areas of stagecraft: acting, direction, dramaturgy, stage management, set design, costume, lighting, properties, make-up or sound.

Lower-scoring papers demonstrated:

- limited or no understanding of the requirements of a particular question; for example, writing a description in response to a question that required an evaluation
- limited use of the marks allocated for each question as a guide for the depth of response required.

Advice for students

- In the examination, students should be guided by the numbers of marks allocated to each question when determining the length and/or detail of their response.
- Where a question is divided up into parts or has more than one focus, students can either divide up their response into sections, for example by using sub-headings, or answer the question in its entirety in one extended response.
- When required, students must name the play/monologue they are writing about (or state the number of the play/monologue as printed on the examination paper).
- Students should take note of the particular type of response required in each question, as indicated by words such as 'describe', 'evaluate', 'explain', 'discuss', 'compare', 'analyse' and 'identify', and respond accordingly.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

The 2006 examination paper did not stipulate that a particular form of written response was required. Students chose to write in essay form, point form, short-answer form or any combination thereof. All these forms were considered acceptable, as long as the student had addressed the focus of the question and the response was appropriate to the type required; for example, an 'evaluation', or a 'discussion'. Where a 'discussion' was required, most students chose to write their answer in either short-answer or essay mode (that is, not in dot points). The examination included a detachable insert that contained stimulus materials pertaining to one of the questions. The students were required to draw on the stimulus materials in their response to Question 3.

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	3	13	35	49	2.3

For Question 1 students were asked to draw on experiences from their involvement with the production of a play in Unit 3.

Part a. required students to describe briefly the performance style(s) applied in the interpretation of the play(s) or excerpt(s) from play(s) of which they were a part.

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A high level response was characterised by:

- description of the performance style(s) with a high level of understanding. The student described aspects of the nature **and** characteristics of the style(s)
- use of theatrical terminology in a highly effective way to discuss the performance style(s)
- inclusion of highly pertinent example(s) to describe the performance style(s) used in the interpretation.

Following is an example of a high level response.

We performed 'Don Juan Returns From the War' by Odon Von Horvath, a play set in Europe at the conclusion of the First World War. In realising our production, we drew primarily on 3 performance styles:

Epic Theatre

Odon Van Horvath originally wrote the play as an epic piece. Epic theatre includes conventions such as:

- *Self-contained episodes – each scene could exist by itself. This also means they could be performed in a different order.*
- *Alienation effect – the audience is not meant to feel for the characters but must be reminded they are watching a play.*
- *Actors as stage hands – props and sets are moved by the actors themselves during performance.*

Non-naturalism

Includes conventions such as:

- *Use of symbolism – props or elements of the set are often symbolic of a state of mind or feeling.*
- *Fragmentary set – the setting of a piece may only be implied rather than realistically built on stage.*
- *Actors playing multiple roles – actors will play more than one character and often undergo a character transformation on stage.*

Realism

- *Complex characters and emotions – actors aim to portray and feel themselves, the emotions of their characters.*
- *Life-like voice and movement – actors present real life situations and behave in socially realistic ways.*
- *3 unities – the action does not jump place, time or change action.*

An acceptable level response was characterised by:

- description of the performance style(s) with a satisfactory level of understanding. The student described aspects of the nature **and/or** characteristics of the style(s)
- use of theatrical terminology in an appropriate way to discuss the performance style(s)
- inclusion of good example(s) to describe performance style(s) used in the interpretation.

A low level response was characterised by:

- description of the performance style(s) with little understanding. The student did not describe either the nature **or** characteristics of the style(s)
- use of little or no theatrical terminology to discuss the performance style(s)
- example(s) that demonstrated little understanding of the performance style(s) used in the interpretation.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	4	11	18	22	17	23	4.0

Students were asked to explain how the performance style(s) applied in the interpretation influenced one area of stagecraft they used during the rehearsal process.

A high level response was characterised by:

- an explanation which demonstrated a high level of understanding of the way(s) in which performance style(s) used in the production influenced the application of the selected area of stagecraft in the rehearsal process
- use of highly pertinent example(s) of the way(s) in which performance style(s) used in the production influenced the application of the selected area of stagecraft in the rehearsal process
- use of highly effective theatrical terminology in the explanation.

An acceptable level response was characterised by:

- an explanation which demonstrated a satisfactory level of understanding of the way(s) in which performance style(s) used in the production influenced the application of the selected area of stagecraft in the rehearsal process
- use of good example(s) of the way(s) in which performance style(s) used in the production influenced the application of the selected area of stagecraft in the rehearsal process
- use of appropriate theatrical terminology in the explanation.



Following is an example of an acceptable level response. The play being discussed is 'Dinkum Assorted'.

The play was set in a biscuit factory in some scenes. In these scenes realism was used in sound in order to recreate this physical setting, since set and props did not. We compiled a track of sound effects to be played throughout biscuit factory scenes that sounded like a factory in operation, for example whirs, pings, hisses, clanks and bangs were combined. Sound was also used for comic effect. The style of traditional Warner Bros. cartoons' sound, which was in turn influenced by the use of sound in the highly non-naturalistic Commedia dell-Arte style, had a strong influence on our use of sound for comic effect. For example an exaggeratedly loud and graphic sound effect was used when Rosie stepped in a cow pat, and a loud scream followed by scary music sound effect was used when a threatening character was described, as coming.

Music was used in 'Dinkum Assorted' both realistically and non-naturalistically. For example, some background music was used that was specifically coming from a nearby army base. Since the characters could hear the music and it had a specific source, this was in keeping with realism. Non-diegetic music is non-naturalistic however, and this was often used to enhance mood, for example, 'Adios' by Glen Miller is played during a conversation between Grace and Florrie.

A low level response was characterised by:

- an explanation which demonstrated a low level of understanding of the way(s) in which performance style(s) used in the production influenced the application of the selected area of stagecraft in the rehearsal process
- use of few, if any, examples of the way(s) in which performance style(s) used in the production influenced the application of the selected area of stagecraft in the rehearsal process
- little or no use of theatrical terminology in the explanation.

Question 2

Monologue chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
%	1	7	10	7	5	8	2	6	10	15	8	10	10	3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	1	1	5	9	14	22	12	14	10	11	5.6

Students were asked to explain how knowledge of one or more the following informed their interpretation of a prescribed scene from the 2006 Theatre Studies Monologue list:

- the historical period in which the play was set and/or conceived
- the play's themes
- the playwright.

A high level response was characterised by:

- a high level of knowledge of the historical period, the play's themes and/or the playwright
- use of highly pertinent examples of how the historical period, the play's themes and/or the playwright informed the interpretation of the prescribed scene
- a high level of understanding of the prescribed scene
- use of highly effective theatrical terminology in the explanation.

An acceptable level of response was characterised by:

- a satisfactory knowledge of the historical period, the play's themes and/or the playwright
- use of well chosen examples of how the historical period, the play's themes and/or the playwright informed the interpretation of the prescribed scene
- a good understanding of the prescribed scene
- use of appropriate theatrical terminology in the explanation.

An example of an acceptable level response is as follows:

5. 'Macbeth'

Both the historical period in which 'Macbeth' was set and the play's themes informed my interpretation of the prescribed scene for Lady Macbeth. 'Macbeth' written by William Shakespeare is set in Scotland (and at some stages in England) in the middle ages. During this time society held a lot of strong beliefs about the king and God. They believed in the Divine Right – which stated that any act against the king was considered a mortal sin against God – the only punishment being death. Not only was it considered high treason, but the universe was expected to become unbalanced if the king's position was disturbed in some way. These values indicated how huge of an act it was to kill the king, who, the Great chain of being (another belief of the time) is the highest valued mortal, underneath only angels and God himself. 'Macbeth' being set in this time, and being written about people who held these beliefs informed my interpretation greatly, as I realised the impact of Macbeth's actions, driven by Lady Macbeth – who therefore must be dominant and ambitious. This is why, I interpreted my scene with Macbeth being a clown. Macbeth was a small-sized clown puppet, always controlled by myself as Lady Macbeth during the prescribed scene. Clowns traditionally represent liminality and this is a subversion of natural order – the murder of the king. A clown symbolically embodies what



people believed would happen if the king was overthrown. Also, being a small clown, emphasised the way Lady Macbeth domineered over Macbeth and during her monologue mocks and tortures Macbeth (by questioning his manhood) as clowns are.

I was also informed by one of the play's themes 'ambition'. Ambition again fuelled my interpretation of Macbeth primarily being chosen as a puppet to signify Lady Macbeth's ability to manipulate and control her own husband just to get what she wants. It too informed my choice to use a red cloth, representative of a burning fire – symbolic of Lady Macbeth's burning desire and ambition – evidently strong if she would kill the king. It informed my decision to layout the starting positions for the monologue as depicted. To signify her state of mind – 'Macbeth is the only object in the way of me achieving my ambition'. [The student drew an illustration to depict this.]

A low level response was characterised by:

- scant knowledge of the historical period, the play's themes and/or the playwright
- use of few, if any, examples of how the historical period, the play's themes and/or the playwright informed the interpretation of the prescribed scene
- little understanding of the prescribed scene
- little or no theatrical terminology in the response.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	2	0	2	4	6	10	14	14	14	13	11	4	5	7.2

Students were asked to describe how they would interpret the play *The Drovers* for a modern-day audience by imaginatively applying two areas of stagecraft to the production. Information about this play was contained in the stimulus material given and in the contextual background on the examination paper. It was clearly stated on the examination that students 'must' refer to the contextual background and one or more of the stimulus materials. No prior knowledge of the contextual background or stimulus materials was necessary.

A high level response was characterised by:

- a high level of understanding and application of two areas of stagecraft
- clear and insightful reference to the contextual background and the stimulus materials
- a highly imaginative context given to interpret the original story for a modern-day audience
- highly effective theatrical terminology used to discuss the production.

An example of a high level response is as follows:

Stagecraft – Direction

In imaginatively applying the stagecraft of direction to 'The Drovers', my interpretation entails the creation of an abstract performance space within the prescribed arena stage, contrasting everyday objects to appear dream-like and thus creating a 'dream-time' feel in my contemporary interpretation. In an overriding eclectic performance style. This will be done by placing a large, wide-reaching tree in the centre of the stage, burnt and charred to indicate the difficulty of surviving and living off the Australian landscape, as the contextual background alludes. Also representing the intergenerational aptness and universality of the current climate of tension between indigenous Australians and those of predominantly European dissent. A paradigm of the 'dream-time' culture – like nature of creation stories indicated by my interpretation in the choice to place rocks on the dirt floor writing 'sorry' to indicate the relevance to contemporary society, a Brechtian convention of 'signs'. Utilising a predominantly red, orange and black colour scheme, earthy and organic [the student used coloured pencils to indicate these colours] to represent the earthy, natural environment of outback Australia. This was inspired by the red and turbulent landscape in Stimulus A (David Boyd). In my interpretation of the scene, the significant delineation of status between Boss and Jackeroo would be made apparent through blocking – Boss assertively using a commanding arm gesture of pointing rigidly off stage right when ordering Jackeroo to 'Get out'. Mindful of the circular nature of the performance space, sight-lines being crucial and blocking so that all of the audience can see, my interpretation involves circular movement, with the actor's keeping their back towards the tree in the centre. Dividing the space, the branches of the tree serve to indicate extensions of human behaviour in artificial inter-cultural relations. Derived from Stimulus B, (images), the inherent grief of Aboriginal representatives in the play will be reflected in my casting of an Indigenous Australian. [The other stagecraft area this student wrote on was sound.]

An acceptable response was characterised by:

- an appropriate understanding and application of two areas of stagecraft
- appropriate reference(s) to the contextual background and the stimulus materials
- an appropriate context given to interpret the original story for a modern-day audience
- use of appropriate theatrical terminology to discuss the production.



An example of an acceptable level response is as follows.

Stagecraft 2 – Acting

To relate to modern day audiences I would use the stagecraft of acting to let the audience relate to the universal themes of mateship and hardship. Referring to Stimulus material A and B showing excerpts of the play I would have the actors perform these naturally and make the process of death of Briglow as real and harrowing as possible, by showing:

- a) Fear in the Boss's voice whilst trying to keep it together*
- b) Real pain on Briglow's face maybe like in Stimulus C with the photograph 'Up in the Sky' showing Briglow's weakening condition – crawling and eventually becoming still and becoming one with nature and its elements*
- c) I would make Pigeon similar to Stimulus B 'Aboriginal Stockmen' with modern day clothing for a stockman and a cigarette but in delivery, very in tune with earth, nature and mourning, lamenting (as described in contextual background) in a traditional way showing the heritage of the Aboriginal people.*
- d) The Jackeroo would be a modern-day worker very much in delivery. Both the Boss and Jackeroo would show conflict with the themes of the play in a naturalistic internal battle manner when at conflict; mateship vs. the very important job. The use of pauses, silence and breaking of voice, very emotional pauses would indicate to us the fragility of humankind when pitted against the unyielding outback and how through the loss of a 'better man' (Stimulus B, script excerpt) is our Australian identity formed and life gains more importance. [The other stagecraft area this student wrote on was set design.]*

A low level response was characterised by:

- little understanding and application and/or perfunctory application of two areas of stagecraft to the interpretation
- use of only one area of stagecraft
- scant reference to the contextual background and/or the stimulus materials
- a simplistic context given to interpret the original story
- little or no use of theatrical terminology to discuss the production.

Question 4

Play chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5
%	1	10	51	11	20	6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	2	2	7	10	14	16	14	14	11	9	5.4

This question pertained to the 2006 VCE Theatre Studies play list for Unit 3. Students were asked to discuss how one area of stagecraft enhanced one or more of the following:

- the historical background of the play
- the social background of the play
- the political background of the play.

A high level of response was characterised by:

- selection and discussion of an effective area of stagecraft in relation to the chosen context(s)
- a high level of understanding of the relationship between context(s) and stagecraft
- use of highly pertinent examples of how and why historical, social and/or political influences directly contributed to one area of stagecraft
- use of highly effective theatrical terminology in the discussion.

Following is an example of a high level response.

4. 'It Just Stopped'

The use of set design in Stephen Sewell's 'It Just Stopped' greatly enhanced the social background of the play. Sewell's play acted primarily as a social commentary on contemporary society and the set effectively captured that in several ways:

- *Upon initial inspection, the set appears to be a realistic interpretation of a modern apartment. Upon closer inspection, however, the set conveys more a sense of heightened realism and suggests that in a contemporary society not all is as it appears to be.*
- *One example of this is the central feature of the set, the jellybean wall. The wall may be seen as a representation of Beth (Catherine McClemons) and Franklin (Marcus Graham) as a modern trend-setting couple. The wall, however, like their relationship is simply for show and doesn't quite belong in its surrounds. Although it appears to be solid, when backlit the wall appeared transparent which may also be likened to Beth and Franklin's relationship.*
- *Stephen Sewell in his play suggests that in the social background of the play, Beth and Franklin's may represent the majority of relationships in a contemporary environment – superficial and lacking in substance.*
- *The overall effect of the set was also to create a feeling of entrapment and a sense of danger. The high angular concrete walls seemed to loom over the audience, creating an ominous feeling and the predominantly white-washed colouring created a stale clinical feel. This is once again representative of what Sewell is trying to convey. The*



placement of the furniture also ensured there was very little open space and characters were constantly having to move around obstacles. This heightened the feeling of entrapment.

- *The size and placement of the window was a constant reminder of the outside world, however, with blinds shut it seemed to suggest that in a contemporary society we tend to block out what we don't want to see.*

An acceptable level of response was characterised by:

- discussion of a well chosen area of stagecraft in relation to the chosen context(s)
- an acceptable level of understanding of the relationship between context(s) and stagecraft
- use of good examples of how and why historical, social and/or political influences directly contributed to one area of stagecraft
- use of appropriate theatrical terminology in the discussion.

A low level of response was characterised by:

- selection of an inappropriate area of stagecraft in relation to the chosen context(s)
- description of the context(s) and/or stagecraft without discussion of how or why the context(s) influenced the stagecraft
- use of few relevant examples of how and why historical, social and/or political influences directly contributed to one area of stagecraft
- little use of theatrical terminology in the response.

Question 5

Play chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5
%	2	26	8	40	18	6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	3	14	18	22	18	21	3.9

This question pertained to the 2006 VCE Theatre Studies play list for Unit 4. Students were asked to evaluate how one actor portrayed one or more character(s) using the performance style(s) applied in the production.

A high level of response was characterised by:

- identification and description of the most important or significant performance style(s)
- detailed and insightful description of the performance style(s), indicating a high appreciation of the performance and the play
- evaluation of an actor's portrayal with direct and insightful reference to the performance style(s)
- use of well chosen and applied theatrical terminology.

An acceptable level of response was characterised by:

- a general identification and description of the performance style(s)
- an acceptable description of the performance style(s), indicating a good appreciation of the performance and the play
- evaluation of an actor's portrayal with some reference to the performance style(s)
- use of appropriate theatrical terminology.

Following is an example of an acceptable level response.

3. 'I Am My Own Wife'

'I Am My Own Wife' is a one-person play involving many characters and is therefore inherently non-naturalistic. As a one-person play it is also therefore a monologue and hence monologue conventions are highly relevant to its performance. Jefferson Mayes used the monologue technique of implied person very successfully to create an impression of other characters, despite being alone on the stage. For example, early in the play Mayes conducted a conversation between Doug and Charlotte and it was clear that the characters were sitting adjacent to one another at the table. Even though Mayes remained in the one seat. Direct address, a highly presentational style of acting, was also used in the play. As Doug, Mayes narrated his letters out to the audience. This direct address was successful in conveying the tone of the letters and motivation of Doug to the audience. Direct address was also used when Charlotte spoke to the audience as though taking them on a tour and when Ziggy used the theatre audience as a talk-show audience. These were highly effective in establishing an intimate actor-audience relationship.

Although the acting style was predominantly non-naturalistic, some naturalistic acting techniques had evidently been used in preparation. This was clear as Mayes played the main characters with great sensitivity and understanding, showing that he must have internalised them, as is consistent with naturalism. Mayes was successful in conveying real characters in the play.

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A low level of response was characterised by:

- superficial identification and description of a performance style(s)
- superficial description of the performance style(s), indicating little appreciation of the performance and the play
- evaluation of an actor's portrayal with little reference to the performance style(s), or a description rather than an evaluation
- little or no use of theatrical terminology.