

CfE

HIGHER DRAMA

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BrightRED Study Guide

CfE HIGHER
DRAMA



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INTRODUCTION

STUDYING CfE HIGHER DRAMA

Higher Drama is a challenging but rewarding course. It offers the opportunity to develop and deepen skills in creating, performing and analysing drama. You will develop a range of both Drama and Production skills that will benefit you in the final exam and beyond. You will gain new skills and abilities through creating and performing drama. You will also develop knowledge and understanding of cultural and social influences on drama. In addition, you will analyse the effectiveness of your own creative work, as well as that of your peers and professional theatre productions.

You will study and analyse a chosen text throughout the course. You will analyse and understand this text from three different perspectives: as an actor, a director and a designer. It is also a requirement of the course that you analyse professional theatre productions and you should seek out opportunities to attend as many, and as wide a range of, theatre productions as you can. You can also watch live recordings of theatrical productions through Digital Theatre and NT Live. Being exposed to as much theatre as possible will greatly enhance your performance in all areas of the course.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

You will develop your creative skills to devise and develop Drama from a variety of stimuli, including text. By working in collaboration with your peers and sharing your ideas, you will explore structure, form and style and gain a firm understanding of cultural influences on Drama. In addition, you will build and develop complex production skills and apply these to your performances.

Throughout the course you will develop your abilities in Acting, Directing and Design. You will look at how the production team work together to create a performance and gain a deep understanding of the different roles. You will work as part of a team, but also have discrete responsibility for aspects of performance.

EVALUATION

Throughout the course you will undertake an evaluation of your own and your peers' performance. Through this evaluation, you will develop analysis skills and reflect on your performance in order to improve in the future. You will also reflect on the work of others and analyse how they could improve their performance.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Throughout the course, you will study a chosen text. You will explore its context, themes and issues and undertake research into the play. This will help you to develop your understanding and ability to act in, direct and design the play for a contemporary **audience**.

You will also develop a deep understanding of production areas and how you would utilise areas of production to enhance a performance of your chosen text.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Throughout the course you will undertake in-depth analysis of professional theatre productions. You will look at the different aspects of the performance and how they communicate with the audience.

COURSE ASSESSMENT: PERFORMANCE

As part of the final assessment of the course, you will undertake a practical exam, either as an actor, director or designer. The practical exam is worth 50 marks, with an additional Preparation for Performance (PfP) which is worth 10 marks. The requirements of the practical exam differ depending on which role you decide to undertake.

As an actor, you will perform **two characters**. Each performance is a maximum of ten minutes in length. You will be assessed on your ability to utilise **voice** and **movement** skills, demonstrate **characterisation** and on the overall impact on the audience.

As a director, you will prepare to direct a text of your choosing (this does not have to be the same text chosen for textual analysis). You will prepare a short extract of around eight pages to direct for the performance assessment. On the day of the exam, the visiting assessor (VA) will ask you to prepare a **rehearsal** for a short extract of around two pages from your chosen section. You will then lead a rehearsal for the extract and answer any questions from the VA. You will be assessed on your interaction with your actors, your interpretation and your **performance concepts**. The rehearsal will last around 30 minutes.

As a designer, you will design a set for your chosen text. You will also choose one additional production role from lighting, sound, costume, props, make-up and hair. You will present your designs to the VA on the assessment day, in addition to demonstrating how your design will be used in performance. The presentation will last around 20 minutes.

Preparation for Performance

This section of the practical exam is worth 10 marks. It is not a folio; it is a summation of how you have interpreted and developed your chosen role. It should include details of:

- how you researched your text(s) and role
- your interpretation of the chosen role
- how you developed the role for performance.

The VA will mark this before your performance/presentation.

COURSE ASSESSMENT: THE WRITTEN PAPER

The written exam is split into three sections. In Section One you will write an essay from the perspective of an actor, or a director, or a designer. This essay will allow you to analyse your chosen text and explain how your production will **communicate** your understanding of the text. In Section Two, you will answer structured questions relating to the use of production in a performance of your selected text. In Section Three you will analyse a contemporary theatre performance. To form this in-depth analysis, you will **focus** on TWO key production areas from a choice of four and discuss how these areas **contribute** to the impact on the audience.



DON'T FORGET

Design includes set, costume, props, lighting, sound, make-up and hair.

DEVISING DRAMA

CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

Theatre in Scotland and all over the world is currently taking risks, combining styles and genres, utilising mixed media and exploring how theatre can keep up with the digital age. It is quite an exciting time and, although many 'new' performance concepts can be traced back to previous practitioners and playwrights, the combination of current styles and sense of experimentation appeals to audiences, and therefore creates incredibly successful productions.



Black Watch

THE NATIONAL THEATRE OF SCOTLAND

Believe it or not, there was no national theatre company in Scotland until 2006 when the National Theatre of Scotland was formed. The mission was to create a 'theatre without walls' which was not confined to a particular theatre building but would travel throughout the country to bring innovative theatre to the people. The company collaborates with playwrights, established theatres such as The Lyceum in Edinburgh and The Citizens in Glasgow, and also with the general public through its various projects and the Learn programme. One of the company's earliest collaborations was with playwright Gregory Burke and Frantic Assembly's Steven Hoggett during the Edinburgh Festival of 2006. The National Theatre of Scotland carried out its promise to deliver ground-breaking theatre for the people of Scotland and the world in the seminal worldwide phenomenon *Black Watch*. Through collaborations and its choices in creating new work, as well as reviving Scottish classics like *The Guid Sisters* and *Men Should Weep* and reimagining classics like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Peter Pan*, the National Theatre of Scotland has managed to find a niche as a company whose audiences will be open to experiment, in the knowledge that what they see will be good and may surprise them. Not bad for a young company!

THE NATIONAL THEATRE

Traditionally, the National Theatre was a straight-laced and worthy company. However, in recent times it has become reinvigorated, creating original theatre with mass appeal. Recent productions, such as *War Horse*, *One Man, Two Guvnors* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, have seen the company reinvigorate the old and embrace the



The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time – National Theatre, photo by Brinkhoff/Mögenburg

new. Through collaboration and **innovation**, the company is currently producing some acclaimed and important work. The National Theatre is able to stage large-scale productions which are often epic and visually stunning while still being able to stage classic texts. The company has an excellent reputation and is almost guaranteed to sell a production on its name alone, making it a powerhouse in the UK theatre landscape.

FRANTIC ASSEMBLY

From seemingly humble beginnings, this company has managed to take the alternative and make it mainstream. It was heavily influenced by DV8, a company formed in 1994 which by its own admission did not initially rise to the challenge. Through mixing clear narrative and physical action, Frantic Assembly creates emotive, often amusing and truly inspiring work, which has been recognised and used by both the National Theatre of Scotland and the National Theatre to create interesting and engaging drama.

DON'T FORGET

Theatre companies provide a huge variety of information and resources online. Utilise their websites in order to research and develop your awareness of the companies' work.

GECKO THEATRE COMPANY

Gecko is a **physical theatre** company which puts its audience at the centre of the action. Its work is actively created to be open to interpretation. It utilises social media in order to interact with and engage with its audience. The process of developing a new Gecko production is long and intensive and includes a 'creative tour' where the company begins to perform the production while still altering and developing it. The company actively works to promote its work to young audiences: 'We have a responsibility to our audiences, especially our young audiences, to produce the most exciting, powerful, challenging work possible – a responsibility we take very seriously.'

THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

Choose one of the theatre companies mentioned above. Research this company and consider how it presents the stories it chooses to tell. You may like to investigate:

- The history of the company
- Its aims
- Awards and recognition
- Collaborations
- Notable productions
- Influences
- Audience responses to productions
- Your own interpretation and opinion of the company's work

Keep a record of what you have discovered as this could influence what you create and the style in which you present it. Your teacher will be looking for a clear progression and through-line from your initial research to the final piece.



ONLINE

Check out the websites of these theatre companies at www.brightredbooks.net

ONLINE TEST

Head to www.brightredbooks.net and test yourself on contemporary theatre.

PRODUCTION ROLES

DIRECTING – PRE-REHEARSAL

The role of the director is pivotal to the success of any theatrical production. As a director, you will be responsible for making decisions which affect all of the other roles in the production. The idea that a director should be all-powerful and should dictate to the actors and crew how to achieve his or her artistic vision is somewhat outdated. To be a good director, above all else, you must be a good negotiator and you must be able to compromise your ideals for the good of the production where necessary. All the production team must have input in terms of their ideas for design and characterisation, for example. It is up to a good director to recognise their team's strengths, and to harness and channel them into the production.

THE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

As a director, you will have responsibility for initiating, developing and coordinating all areas of the production. You will plan a schedule and engage with your designer in the pre-production stage. You will cast your actors and plan and communicate your ideas for blocking, characterisation, voice and movement. You must be able to negotiate and communicate clearly with your team to lead them 'from page to stage' – from the original textual extract to the performance. Following the performance, you will engage in an evaluation of how you and your team have worked together to realise the production.

PLANNING

The adage 'Failing to prepare is preparing to fail' is totally true in the case of directing a play. Before you have had your initial production meeting with your cast and crew, you must have a clear vision and expectations for the final performance. You must be able to communicate your plans clearly at the outset of the process, as once rehearsals are under way your energies as director will probably be focused on your actors, and the designers will be left to work on their own initiative to develop ideas for your approval.

Research

Initial research is essential in gaining an understanding of the text you are staging. There may well be aspects of the play or the actions of its characters that do not make sense to you on first reading. By researching the play and rereading it from different characters' perspectives, you should be able to fully understand and interpret the play.

Areas to research:

- The historical setting
- The geographical setting
- Politics
- Social context
- Popular culture (music, cinema, television, hobbies and pastimes)
- The playwright – his/her other work, status, popularity
- Themes/issues/messages of the text

Following your initial research, you can utilise what you have learned to inform your interpretation and performance concepts.

Marking your script

Before you start the rehearsal process, as director, you should begin to mark your blocking on the text. This gives essential information such as entrances and exits, moves and

contd

positioning for your actors. Your blocking should be flexible and, through negotiation with your actors (they will have ideas too), you may wish to alter and adapt as you go. Throughout your rehearsal period, you may also wish to construct a dramatic commentary which will allow you to demonstrate your blocking and interpretative notes alongside your chosen technical effects and justification of your choices. This will be a clear demonstration of your understanding and interpretation of the text and a great addition to your folio.

Dramatic commentary

Annotating the text – Through the numbering of particular words and lines on your script, you can clearly link them to the columns on the dramatic commentary. This will make it obvious and easy to follow your instructions.

Moves and interpretative notes – In this column, you should cross-reference your explanation with the script (through your numbered annotations). Here, you should detail the actors' entrances and exits, their movements (**facial expression, body language**, etc.) and their moves across stage and how they are to carry them out: for example, *Parris x's (crosses) DSR (Down Stage Right) at a fast pace*. In addition to this, you should detail any voice instruction, proxemics and positioning plus any other interpretative notes.

Justification – Again, through cross-referencing, you should explain why you have chosen to direct your actors in a particular way: for example, *to show he is angry at Abigail's lack of respect*.

Effects – In the final column of the commentary, you should explain any lighting (LFX), sound (SFX) and special effects that are essential to the action.

Example:

Extract from dramatic commentary

MERCUTIO (1) Where the devil should this Romeo be? Came he not home to-night?
 BENVOLIO Not to his father's; I spoke with his man.
 MERCUTIO (2) Ah, that same pale hard-hearted wench, that Rosaline.
 Torments him so, that he will sure run mad.
 BENVOLIO Tybalt, the kinsman of old Capulet, (LFX 2)
 Hath sent a letter to his father's house.

Moves and interpretative notes	Justification	Technical effects
(1) M enters USR and x's DSC at a quick pace with a flustered tone and aggravated facial expression.	He is in a hurry to find Romeo as he has not seen him since the previous night. He is an emotional character and is quite rash and over the top.	LFX 2: On the mention of Tybalt's letter the lights fade to a lower intensity to signify that this is not a positive event.
(2) M laughs and shakes his head.	Rosaline has been giving Romeo the run-around for a while and M finds it amusing that Romeo still lusts after her.	

Through careful planning and research, a director can set the whole production up for success. It makes it much easier to communicate what you want to see in performance if you have detailed notes and plans to work from.

THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

List, list, list!

Lists are the director's friend. They are essential for keeping organised and developing the text for performance. Read through the extract you are planning to direct. Using different coloured pens or pencils, note down anything that the extract requires, such as a character's entrance, a personal prop, or a lighting change. Ask yourself if there is anything else which is ESSENTIAL to the performance of the extract and list it! This will help you keep your team on track and enable you to clearly communicate your ideas and vision to all concerned.



VIDEO LINK

Check out the clip at www.brightredbooks.net for expert advice on how to direct a play.



DON'T FORGET

By photocopying your script pages and sticking them to A4 paper or into a workbook, you will have much more 'white space' around the lines of the text to write your notes. You can also place a blank page opposite each page of script in order to write notes, lists and diagrams – displaying your thought processes and serving as a reminder to you during rehearsals. Be sure to check the copyright licence with your teacher before photocopying.



ONLINE TEST

Test yourself on directing at www.brightredbooks.net

PREPARING FOR THE WRITTEN ASSESSMENT

PART B – ACTING AND DESIGNING

AS AN ACTOR

As with the director questions, as an actor you will be asked to explain or describe your chosen performance concepts or acting concepts and how they will be used to communicate meaning to the audience. It is also possible that you could be asked to explain how you would prepare for a role and communicate the desired impact on the audience. The areas you will discuss are similar to those previously detailed in the director section, but the perspective is on how you as the actor will communicate with your audience through your performance.



Acting concepts

Acting concepts include characterisation, acting techniques, acting style, voice, movement, proxemics, interaction between characters, use of costume, use of prop, and use of make-up and hair.

Note: For rehearsal techniques see the section on directing (page 17).

Example:

The first part of the question is recognisable from page 61.

As an actor, describe **five** ways in which a central character highlights the themes and issues of your selected text. You must use detailed textual references to support your answer.

Describe in detail how, as an actor, you would use **five** acting concepts to highlight the themes and issues to the audience. (These must be clearly related to the first part of the question.)

To highlight the religious theme when portraying Mag, I would use movement and positioning. I would stand centre-stage and mime out crossing myself before standing with my hands clasped in prayer, mimicking Sister Pascal. I will also roll my eyes to portray that I do not agree with the nun's views, highlighting the rebellion Mag has towards religion. After poking fun at Sister Pascal, I will glance towards the sky, demonstrating that she is checking if God is watching. This would highlight the theme of religion and rebellion, as Mag is the focus at this point and the audience will be drawn to her positioning. Also, through my movement it will be really obvious that although Mag is rebelling against her religion it is in fairly small ways, as she still abides by its customs in a general sense.

DON'T FORGET Directing and acting questions are very similar, so you must be careful how you word your response.

AS A DESIGNER

As with directing and acting, it is required in the design essay that you discuss five different design concepts. These can be taken from any production area. However, you will lose credit if you fail to cover a variety of different areas.

Design concepts

- **Venue** – Building or location where the performance is being staged.
- **Period** – The historical time period and location of the play.
- **Shifts in time** – If the time period of the play changes through **flashbacks/flash forwards**.
- **Stage configuration** – How the performance space is set up – proscenium arch, traverse, inverted traverse, promenade, thrust, in the round.
- **Actor–audience relationship**.
- **Immediate circumstances** – What are the immediate requirements of the action? For example, if a stage direction states that the character sits at a table, the designer would have to source or create the appropriate table and chair.
- **Onstage/offstage world** – What we see onstage and how this continues offstage. For example, if a character exits to an unseen room, this would be the offstage world of the play.
- **Set design, props, costume, make-up, lighting, sound, drama media.**
- **Fabric and materials.**
- **Colour and style.**
- **Age, personality, status and relationships of the characters.**



Example:

You will recognise the first part of this question from page 61.

1. As a designer, explain **five** ways in which a key scene creates dramatic tension in your selected text. You should use detailed textual references to justify your answer.
- (b) Explain how you would use **five** design concepts in order to create dramatic tension in this scene. (These need to be linked to the first part of the question.)

Initially, I would use a UV light which would highlight two large fluorescent balloons, one pink and one blue, as they float towards the roof – these would not be real balloons but would be lowered via the flies and would be on wires, so the floating to the ceiling would be slow and gradual as the voices of Jo and the boy are heard offstage. The remainder of the stage would be in blackout. Following the balloons' disappearance, I would use a blue/grey gel on a single fresnel to create a gloomy and tense atmosphere. This lantern would be focused on the sofa centre-stage. As the dialogue begins, I would fade in a low grey/blue wash so that the actors can be seen and heard. The use of this cold lighting state would create tension, as we have just heard a happy exchange offstage and the balloons floating by gave the audience hope that Jo's fortunes were changing. The scene they are then faced with negates this and creates tension as a result.

DON'T FORGET

You may favour a particular area in your practical work, but that doesn't mean you will write your best essays in that particular area!

VIDEO LINK

Learn more about design concepts by watching the clip at www.brightredbooks.net

ONLINE TEST

Head to www.brightredbooks.net for a test on Part B.

THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

There are pros and cons to each essay type. It is important that you practise each type of essay, as you don't know which one will suit you best in the final exam. Have a look at the example essays on the SQA website and try out a variety of director/designer/actor essays so that you are adept at writing each type.



DRAMA

Kerry Reith

This BrightRED Study Guide is the ultimate companion to your CfE Higher Drama studies! Written by our trusted author and experienced Drama teacher, Kerry Reith, this book is full-colour and packed with clear and accessible information, excellent examples, activities and advice. Inside, you will find:

- ▶ **All the essential course information, fully up-to-date with SQA course changes**, arranged in easily digestible double-page topic spreads.
- ▶ **Full colour, accessible and engagingly designed pages** to make sure all that study sticks!
- ▶ **Don't forget** pointers offering advice on the key facts to remember, and on how to avoid common mistakes.
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ISBN 978-1-84948-342-1



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