

N5

National 5 DRAMA

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BrightRED Study Guide

Curriculum for Excellence

N5

DRAMA



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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCING NATIONAL 5 DRAMA

STUDYING DRAMA

Drama is a creative subject and great fun to study. Throughout this course you will have opportunities to develop skills in creating and presenting drama to an audience. It is not just the final production that matters however, but also the entire process of developing a production.

You will learn many new skills and refine some you already have, but the most important skill in studying drama by far is working with others. Almost everything you do in this course will involve working collaboratively in some way, and your level of success will largely depend on your ability to communicate and negotiate in a group situation. Try to bear this in mind throughout the process and above all be flexible and creative in how you approach working in a team.

The course aims are to enable learners to:

- generate and communicate thoughts and ideas when creating drama
- develop a knowledge and understanding of a range of social and cultural influences on drama
- develop a range of skills in presenting drama
- develop knowledge, understanding and the use of a range of production skills when presenting drama
- explore form, structure, genre and style.

The purpose of the National 5 Drama course is to enable you to develop and use a range of drama and production skills.

DRAMA SKILLS

Throughout the course you will have opportunities to develop your drama skills through contributing to the drama process. You will work with others to respond to **stimuli** – including **text** – to generate ideas for drama and devise performances. You will experiment with drama skills to:

- communicate ideas to an audience
- use a range of acting skills and **characterisation** techniques
- explore **form, genre, structure** and **style**
- gain experience of evaluating your own work and that of others.

DRAMA: PRODUCTION SKILLS

During your course you will also have an opportunity to focus on the skills required to contribute to a production. You will have the opportunity to learn about a variety of production roles and how they contribute to a performance. You will be required to work with others to generate ideas for a **production concept** and to analyse and apply a range of production skills. These could include lighting, **costume**, sound, **props**, set design and make-up.

The National 5 Drama course is externally assessed through a question paper and a performance.

QUESTION PAPER

The question paper is carried out under exam conditions. It lasts 1 hour and 30 minutes and is worth 60 marks which make up 40% of the overall course award. There are two sections: an evaluation worth 20 marks and a response to a stimulus for 40 marks.

EVALUATION

The evaluation will involve you answering questions to evaluate your contribution to a production. You can choose any production you have been part of during your course in either an acting or a production role.

Be prepared to answer questions about your intended audience for the production and your thinking behind the aims of the production. Think about how you wanted the audience to feel or react and the mood and atmosphere you aimed to create. You will also be asked to evaluate how successfully this was achieved. Remember to justify everything you say with evidence or examples and don't be afraid to highlight areas for improvement. As long as you can explain why something was not quite as successful as you would have liked and how you would develop this in future it is useful evaluation and will be awarded marks.

To prepare for this, it is useful to practise evaluating your own and others' work throughout your course in a logbook or blog. See the sections on recording evidence for more on this (pp 64–5 and 90–91).

RESPONSE TO A STIMULUS

The response to a stimulus section will involve you creating ideas for a dramatic performance inspired by one of the given **stimuli**. There will be a choice of stimuli which could include a photograph, a phrase, a newspaper headline, an extract from a script or an object. You will be asked to choose one of the stimuli and to generate ideas for a performance.

This section will include questions about process, performance and production elements. You will need to be able to describe and justify your intentions behind the production, such as the main theme or message. You might be asked about the **rehearsal techniques** you would use, the structure of the narrative, design elements such as lighting or costume, **theatre conventions** you would include and so on.

Again, you must justify every choice you make. For example, it is not enough to simply describe what you would like your set to look like. You must explain why you have made this choice in terms of how it adds to the production. Does it add to the overall mood or feel of the piece? Does it allow for the right kind of movement around the performance space?

PERFORMANCE

The performance is worth 60 marks (and 60% of the overall course award): 50 marks for the performance itself and 10 marks for the preparation of the performance. You will be assessed on the preparation and performance of an extract of text for an audience. The performance should last between 10 and 50 minutes depending on the number of people performing. There should be a minimum of two performers and a maximum of ten. Not all performers need to be assessed. You can choose an acting or a production role for the performance.

If you choose a production role for the performance, you will need to demonstrate your design or concept for the production through drawings, designs and/or mood boards. You will also need to demonstrate the practical realisation of your design or concept in the performance.

PREPARATION OF PERFORMANCE

This will provide evidence of your research and thinking behind the performance. It should demonstrate the reasons for the choice of text to perform, your research into the text, your interpretation of the text, your role and the process you went through to design your concept. For more on this, read the Assessment chapter on pages 84–95.



THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

There is a great deal of freedom in this largely practical course to make your own choices and decisions about what direction to take the drama and how to progress through the course. Reflect often on your learning and challenge yourself to develop new skills.

The 'Things to Do and Think About' section in every chapter contains useful suggestions for you to try throughout your course. The activities will help you to develop and practise your drama and production skills as you progress through the course. They can be used as introductory or warm-up activities or help with rehearsals and performances.



ONLINE

You can see an example question paper at www.brightredbooks.net/N5Drama

DRAMA SKILLS

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is important that you can demonstrate an awareness of the **social and cultural influences** on your drama work. All plays or devised performances are a product of their particular time and place, so the social and cultural influences of the time will have affected the writing. Even if it is not immediately obvious, we can identify these influences in the way characters behave, speak and relate to one another.

During your research, you will be guided by the main theme you decide to focus on, but it is useful to keep in mind other areas that could inform your drama. Try giving the following issues some thought in your research.

THEMES TO RESEARCH

GENDER

Attitudes and beliefs about gender roles have changed throughout history and differ according to specific cultures. Think about the time period and culture of your setting. Are there certain things you need to consider about gender – for example, the feminist movement of the 60s and 70s? How would women behave and how would this been seen by the rest of society? In Sophocles' *Antigone*, for example, which was written around 441 BC and is set in Thebes, you would need to think about the way in which the Greek society of the time viewed women, and how Antigone's behaviour fits in with that.

A production of Sophocles' *Antigone*

RACE

Attitudes towards racial difference and issues such as mixed-race relationships have changed and this might require consideration in your drama. Researching people's personal stories and their feelings about race along with the general attitudes of the time will help if you are portraying a character in this position. For example, the character of Jo in *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney lives in Salford in North West England in the 1950s, when attitudes towards mixed-race relationships were very different to today.

A production of *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney

SEXUALITY

Again, attitudes have changed towards sexuality. It is not really that long ago that homosexuality was illegal in the UK, and it is still discriminated against in many parts of the world. Some plays – like *Cloud Nine* by Caryl Churchill – deal with this directly, but others – such as Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of being Ernest*, written in 1895 – have more of an undercurrent or subtext because of the time in which they are set.

A production of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of being Ernest*

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ACTIVITY

If you are interested in these issues, research one of the plays mentioned and find out about the political and social themes of the time. This could be a useful starting point for your own work.

CUSTOMS

If your production is to be set in a country or culture you are not familiar with, research some of the customs of the place and time. Likewise, think about diversity in your production. To reflect a diverse society, you will probably have to research the customs of other cultures living in the UK. Quite often when people are displaced from their homeland, customs can become even more important to them because it's a link to their original culture.

RELIGION

Religion can have many parallels with racial issues and it also incorporates customs and rituals that you might be unfamiliar with. Understanding the beliefs and the significance of religion to a society could be important if you are dealing with themes of bullying, sectarianism, terrorism, difference and even football.

EDUCATION

When researching a character, it might be useful to consider the kind of education that character has received and how this might have affected their view of the world, ambitions and possibly the way they speak.

WAR/TERRORISM

Even if you are not focusing on war or terrorism as a theme, it can have a significant effect on a society. For example the ongoing **war on terror** creates significant paranoia in society today and heightens racial and religious tension in many places. In the UK, some ethnic or religious groups can experience more harassment after a terrorist attack, which can result in bullying and suspicion in school and on the street.

HEALTH

Standards in health care and hygiene have changed over time, so consider this in your production – particularly if it is historical. Think about the beliefs about cures for the Black Death, and the kind of illnesses that people regularly suffered from. In medieval times, for example, there was no knowledge of germs: disease was thought to be a punishment from God, bad luck or influenced by the stars.



THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

Thinking about your script or stimulus, decide when and where you will set your drama. Do a search online for a newspaper from that time and place. (Google News has a reasonable archive of historical newspapers.) The newspaper will give you a good indication of the important issues of the day, which you can then research further.

Allocate an appropriate issue to each group member. Each person should research the issue and return to the group with three ways in which it might affect the drama.

If you are using a historical play, read through it and list all the themes and issues that are relevant to a modern audience such as jealousy, bullying, discrimination and lust for power.

DON'T FORGET

This list is not exhaustive: there are many other issues you can consider such as politics, technology, fashions and popular culture.

DON'T FORGET

You might decide to update an older play and concentrate on the themes that are still relevant today.

ONLINE

Head to www.brightredbooks.net/N5Drama for a useful resource from the BBC that uses *Macbeth* as an example of how to research themes.

ONLINE TEST

Test yourself on your knowledge of researching social and cultural influences at www.brightredbooks.net/N5Drama

DRAMA SKILLS

DRAMA FORM

Drama **form** is a very difficult thing to define. You will find that the terms **form**, **genre** and **style** all seem interchangeable when discussing drama and that the definitions overlap depending on what you are reading or whom you are talking to. You will even find that some forms also feature in a list of **theatre conventions**. Be aware that most of the forms described here could also be on a list of **drama styles** or **genres**, so don't be too rigid with these definitions.

Generally speaking, drama or theatre form is the **shape** of the drama. Certain productions use particular **conventions** and **techniques** that give it a certain character and it falls into a category because of this. Categorising drama in this way helps an audience to read a performance as they understand the **conventions** used and have certain expectations of the form. It has nothing to do with content: it's more about the **structure** and shape of the narrative rather than what happens or how it's performed.

COMMON FORMS

PLAY – SCRIPTED OR IMPROVISED

At the most basic level of form a play or a performance can be either scripted or improvised. There may be elements of both or it may be a performance based on **rehearsed improvisation**.

PHYSICAL THEATRE

Physical theatre emphasises physical movement as a form of expression. Some physical theatre productions also use speech or song, but the physical movement is the principle mode of expression.

These productions are usually devised rather than scripted. They often combine music, dance, mime and visual art and encourage either audience participation or performers coming into the audience space. Sub-genres of physical theatre can be mime, circus, clowning and dance-drama. Some well-known physical theatre companies are DV8 and Frantic Assembly.

MASK

Mask theatre contains many of the elements of physical theatre, because there are conventions connected to the use of masks that require greater physicality. Traditional forms of mask theatre use stock or stereotyped characters but more modern forms can be more subtle. There are a variety of types of mask that allow for different types of performance such as: **half mask**; **full mask**; **neutral mask** and **fixed mask**. If an actor is wearing a full face mask they generally don't speak.

Sub-genres of mask theatre include **Commedia dell'arte**, Greek theatre, mystery and miracle plays. Trestle is a well-known mask and physical theatre company.

PANTOMIME

Pantomime is largely a British phenomenon. Pantomimes are musical comedies, usually loosely based on a fairy tale. They always contain elements of **slapstick** and farce, dancing, topical humour, current songs, audience participation and cross-dressing actors. They are usually performed at Christmas.

DANCE-DRAMA

This is a sub-genre of physical theatre and in western theatre this is strongly influenced by contemporary dance. It differs from physical theatre in that the action is mainly set to music and the story is told through dance. There are many different forms of dance drama with well-known examples from Japan, India and Indonesia.

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MIME

Mime is the performance of a story without the use of speech. It is closely related to mask and physical theatre, because the emphasis is on physical movement for expression. Famous practitioners include Charlie Chaplin, Rowan Atkinson and Marcel Marceau.

MONOLOGUE

This is a **device** found in various forms of drama and is included in the techniques and conventions chapter (pp 36–37). It can, however, also be a genre of drama in the form of **monologue** plays or one-person shows.

PUPPET

This is an extremely old form of theatre that involves storytelling through the use of varying types of puppet. Chinese Shadow Theatre and Japanese Bunraku puppet theatre are well-known examples. Many modern productions such as *War Horse* and the National Theatre of Scotland's 2012 production of *A Christmas Carol* use a mixture of puppets and live action very successfully.



THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

Experiment by performing well-known stories in different forms. You could try *Little Red Riding Hood* as physical theatre, *Jack and the Beanstalk* as mask theatre or even *Romeo and Juliet* as pantomime (although you might have to change the ending).

Try mixing up forms and genres. Experiment with a tragic mime or a masked melodrama. This can be good fun, and helps you to learn the **conventions** and **techniques** involved.



DON'T FORGET

These are broad categories and many productions will not fit easily into only one category. Many use elements of several forms.



VIDEO LINK

There are clips of inspiring productions at www.brightredbooks.net/N5Drama and a fascinating talk about how the horses in *War Horse* were made.



DON'T FORGET

The form that you choose for your own production will be influenced in large part either by the text you are using or by your audience and what will appeal to them.



ONLINE TEST

Take the 'Drama Form' test at www.brightredbooks.net/N5Drama

VIDEO LINK



Check out the clips 'DV8: The Cost of Living' and 'Frantic Assembly Ignition 2009 Bed Scene' at www.brightredbooks.net/N5Drama



PRODUCTION SKILLS

SOUND

As a sound designer, your responsibilities range from choosing music and sound effects, amplification of voices and controlling volume levels to ensuring that everything can be heard perfectly. Like the lighting designer, you need to combine creativity and technical skills to enhance the mood and atmosphere of a production.



RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SOUND DESIGNER

READ THE SCRIPT

As with all the production roles, your job as sound designer starts with reading the script or extract through several times so you know the story and are aware of the content, style, period, atmosphere and setting of the play. Note down requirements and ideas for sound effects and music. Stage directions such as 'a loud crash is heard' or 'he exits slamming the door' will also give you some ideas.

WORK WITH THE TEAM

You are a member of a team, so you must therefore discuss the sound effects requirements with the director, other production team members and the cast. The sound must be coordinated with the action, so you need to organise sound and music during rehearsals to help the actors know their cues.

RESEARCH

Research the period and location of the play. You might need to know about music from a specific country or era and how to produce certain sound effects to create an authentic setting and atmosphere for the production.

You might also need to research where to source sound effects, how to create them, how to record voice-overs and how to find music requested by the director.

MAKE DESIGN DECISIONS

As the sound designer, your creative decisions about sounds and music have to reflect the **design concept** that the team has decided upon. You need to source the sound effects and music and complete a sound **cue sheet** showing pre-show and incidental music, sound effects, the source of sound, the volume and duration of each sound.

PREPARE EQUIPMENT

It is your job to ensure that you have all the equipment you need – including a mixing desk, microphones and computer software – and that you know how to use it. If you are borrowing equipment for a production, organise how it will be picked up and dropped off.

Create a playlist or load sounds onto the programme or equipment you are using, so that there is no delay before the sound plays.

There is a great deal of sound software available to experiment with, and much of it is free.

REFINE AND ADJUST

It is very important that you attend rehearsals and practise operating the sound several times before the performance because you will probably need to resolve issues and make adjustments to sound levels and durations.

Work closely with the cast so everyone knows how to respond to cues. Keep a rehearsal diary to note things you might need to change or problems you need to solve.

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PERFORM

One of the most important aspects of your role will be to operate the sound during the performance. For this you will need to use a cue sheet, check all the equipment is working and perform a sound check to test for volume levels before the performance.

AFTER THE SHOW

Once all the performances are over, you will be responsible for dismantling and returning any borrowed equipment and resetting or storing the sound equipment.



KEY TERMS AND VOCABULARY

Crossfade – when one sound is faded out and another faded in with no break in between.

Cue – a signal for a sound effect to begin or end.

Fade in – bringing a sound in by slowly increasing the volume.

Fade out – slowly decreasing the volume of a sound until it stops.

Live SFX – a sound effect that is created live during the performance.

Mixing desk – a control desk for sound effects, microphones and music.

Pre-recorded SFX – a sound effect or music that has been recorded prior to the performance.



THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

Remember that not every sound has to be produced electronically. There is still a place for live sound. Can you use physical objects or people to create sounds such as crashes or gunshots off stage?



ONLINE

There is some useful information about sound design at www.brightredbooks.net/N5Drama



DON'T FORGET

You must document the whole process of sound design for a production in your support log. Make sure you include design ideas, any problems you encountered and how you solved the problems.



DON'T FORGET

Make sure you are aware of any health and safety considerations involved in sound design. See the section about health and safety (pp 82–83) for more help and information about this.

DON'T FORGET



A minimum of six different sound effects and eight sound cues should be included in the sound design at this level.

ONLINE



Head to www.brightredbooks.net to find links for free sound production and cue softwares Multiplay and Audacity.



ONLINE TEST

How well have you learned this topic? Head to www.brightredbooks.net/N5Drama to take the test.

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DRAMA

Samantha MacDonald

This BrightRED Study Guide is just the thing you need to tackle your course and gain the exam skills essential to succeed at National 5 Drama. Written by trusted author and experienced Drama teacher, Samantha MacDonald, this book is packed with brilliant examples, tasks and advice. It is the ultimate companion to your studies:

- ▶ **Contains all of the essential course information**, arranged in easily digestible topics.
- ▶ **Designed in full colour, highly illustrated, accessible and engaging** to make sure all that study sticks!
- ▶ **Don't forget!** pointers offer advice on key facts and on how to avoid common mistakes.
- ▶ **Things to do and think about** sections at the end of each topic packed with great activities to boost your drama skills.
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