

Unit Three – The Final Performance

This is the final component of your GCSE assessment and makes up the final 40% of your marks.

You will work in a group to prepare a performance which will be presented to and assessed by a visiting Examiner.

You will work in groups of between 3 and 9 pupils. For each person in your group, the performance should be five minutes in length so that if you have a group of 3 your performance should last fifteen minutes and if you have a group of 9, your performance will need to be forty-five minutes long!

Although you must work in a group, you will be awarded marks as an individual.

The most important aspect of achieving success in this Unit of your examination is that you must be **committed**. If just one person lets you down or does not attend rehearsals then you will all risk losing marks.

The theme for your performance each year will be set by the Examination Board. The themes are quite general which leaves you plenty of scope to be creative but you must abide by the theme. There is a sample examination paper at the end of this section for you to have a look at.

As long as you stick to the set theme, you are free to decide what form your performance will take.

- 📖 You may present a **scripted** piece which can be a full-length script or an extract from a longer play or even a selection of scenes
- 📖 You may **devise** your own piece based on a stimulus associated with the set theme
- 📖 You may present a piece which is a **combination** of devised and scripted scenes

You will be marked on;

- 📖 Your use of voice and movement skills
- 📖 The way that you present your role and characterise the performance
- 📖 The way that you communicate with and respond to other performers
- 📖 How you communicate the piece to the audience
- 📖 How well you demonstrate your understanding of the piece's content, style and form

Presenting a scripted performance

This option allows you to take the work of a published playwright and perform it making alterations where necessary to suit your group's performance skills, the gender mix and the size of your group.

You are required to take on the role of an actor and work with the other people in your group as a performance company. You will interpret the script, cast the roles, decide on your staging techniques, plan a thorough rehearsal schedule and ensure that your performance is the best it can be.

Finding material

- ☞ Try to find a balance of roles in terms of gender and the amount of time the character spends on stage (remember, you are meant to have equal performance time in order to be assessed fairly). You are allowed to have single gender groups but this can often give you problems when interpreting a role
- ☞ Choose subject matter that interests you otherwise you will not be as committed to the performance
- ☞ Make sure that the language is appropriate. Whilst some swear words are allowed and indeed appropriate depending on the theme of the play, Examiners do not look kindly on gratuitous bad language presented by sixteen-year olds
- ☞ Choose a script which has the correct number of roles for your group size otherwise you may have to alter the script or your group
- ☞ Think about the setting for the play. Can the staging be simplified for the drama studios. If it requires a huge scene change and a vast crew of stage hands then think again!
- ☞ Can some smaller roles be doubled up? This could provide a good opportunity for you to demonstrate versatility in performance and show different performance techniques in several roles
- ☞ Think about adapting the script. Can you easily add monologues or some physical theatre to enhance your performance chances?

What the Examiner is looking for:

- ☞ A focused performance in which everyone is involved
- ☞ A clear demonstration of your voice and movement skills
- ☞ That the meaning of the play is clearly communicated to the audience
- ☞ A piece which runs smoothly and looks professionally presented
- ☞ Imaginative and appropriate staging

Presenting a devised performance

This option allows you to be totally creative and original in your performance so long as you remember to stick with the set theme.

As with the scripted performance, you will need to work as a group to take the performance through the stages of development, rehearsal and performance. You will have covered many different performance pieces in you work during the course and you are free to incorporate any techniques and ideas you have used in your lessons or workshops.

Getting started

- ☞ Look at the exam paper which you will be given (there is an example at the end of this section)
- ☞ Brainstorm some ideas and ways of working
- ☞ Try them out! Don't spend too long discussing them first!
- ☞ Decide on a structure. This is how you tell the story in your performance. You will need to plan carefully how you plan your plot so that your story is clear to the audience. Below are some basic structures that are often used in performance. These can form the basis of your initial planning and you can then adapt them to suit yourselves.

A basic structure follows this main pattern;

Exposition	setting the scene
Encounter	a meeting of some kind
Conflict/complication	the problem
Climax	point at which the strands pull together
Resolution	the moment the events are resolved

So long as you tell the story clearly you can add in a range of structural techniques such as;

Still images	Monologue
Choral speaking	Dream sequence
Narrative	Direct audience address
Quiz show	Soundscape
Interview	Role play
Dance	Mime
Ritual	Symbolic funeral
Good angel/Bad angel	Spoken conscience
TIE structure	

Presenting a combination Performance

The presentation of a combination performance can

- ☞ Ensure that you structure a piece which allows all members of your group to show their best performance skills.
- ☞ You can include a wider range of material which might make your piece more interesting.
- ☞ It also gives you a starting point but then allows you to develop your own ideas in a creative and original way.

Whichever form you choose, you must remember the following points in performance;

- ☞ Keep your hair off your face – you are marked on facial expression and if the Examiner can't see your face you won't do as well!
- ☞ Speak loudly and clearly
- ☞ Stay in role ALL THE TIME
- ☞ Try to think like the character. How would they respond on stage even if it isn't their turn to speak?
- ☞ React all the time. You are always seen on stage. Don't stand there like a plank!
- ☞ Listen to speech all the time and react to it as though it is the first time your character has heard it
- ☞ Use facial expression, body language, gesture, movement and position to communicate your character to the audience
- ☞ Interact with others on the stage even if it is just with your eyes
- ☞ Make sure you are ready for the performance – have you got all your props?

The most important thing to remember is that you must work together and be committed so that you can all succeed.

You cannot rehearse enough. There is always room for improvement.