

**GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

SPEECH AND DRAMA SG

The assessment strategies discussed in this memo apply to both papers (V and W)

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Learners must respond to three different texts in Section A.

Responses should show understanding of the dramatic principles.

Dramatic principles must be discussed in the context of the socio-political background.

The principles of OBE assessment will be taken into account when marking this paper.

MARK ALLOCATION

Section A: 3 x 30 = 90

Section B: 40

Section C: 20

SECTION A

**QUESTION 1
ABSURD THEATRE**

Assessment strategy:

Learners must discuss any THREE of the listed dramatic principles – 3x10=30

Learners may refer to political, social, historical and ideological aspects prevalent during the first half of the twentieth century and then mention that the Absurd plays displayed drastic changes in structure, characterisation and use of space as a result of this awareness.

The 30 mark essay response should be made up out of three segments of 10 marks each. Rather than evaluating the “factual” information given below as compulsory information it is a guideline towards the kind of understanding to be expected if the outcome is achieved. The 10 marks can be divided into 5 marks for an understanding of the socio-political concerns and 5 marks for the awareness of the dramatic principles employed by the Absurd dramatists.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO ABSURDISM

The 19th century saw a revolution in man's way of looking at the world.

New ideologies were forged which threw nations and classes into violent conflict in the 20th century.

The shift in the perception of the godhead influenced the way in which people perceived themselves.

Nietzsche attacked Christianity as decadent and shocked the world with his statement that God is dead – 1883.

Darwin destroyed notions on man as being different and special when he published his findings on evolution. His book *On the Origin of Species* and his theories on the survival of the fittest were interpreted by Victorian clergymen as a blasphemous attack on the Bible.

Marx, the founder of modern Communism, saw history as a class struggle. He believed the philosopher's role was not only to understand history but to change it.

In Europe, the Frenchman Jean-Paul Sartre, born in 1905, developed the philosophy of Existentialism.

In his Theory of Relativity, **Albert Einstein** revolutionised man's concept of the nature of time and energy. His ideas challenged the fixed or essential truth that had served mankind for two thousand years.

The first (1914-18) and Second (1939-45) **World Wars** were fought on a scale larger than any other in history. The costs both in materials and casualties were higher than ever before but out of the carnage of war came rapid technological progress.

The most significant weapon to emerge from the Second World War was the **nuclear bomb**, which introduced the possibility of total destruction of the human race.

ABSURD STRUCTURE

It reflects the feeling that human experience has reached a dead-end.

It does not adhere to the characteristics of a well-made play.

Everything operates on a flat plain of equal significance.

The form is either circular and repetitious or displays a declining spiral into futility.

It is not concerned with the presentation of events as much as the presentation of individuals in a situation – to communicate their experience of existence.

The Absurd does not adhere to the beginning/middle end formula – no vertical plotting building towards a climax.

Some absurd plays display a declining spiral structure moving into futility and dissolution.

It presents individuals within a situation in such a way as to communicate their experience of existence.

The situation is full of activity – none of which changes the situation in the least.

ABSURD CHARACTERISATION

Absurd plays often represent mankind in general.

Character as an abstraction of human attitudes

They demonstrate or symbolise human properties.

Exaggerated characters

Interchangeable: double act

No background

Social puppets

Clown-like behaviour

Heightened energy; super reality

Mechanical qualities; automatism

ABSURD DIALOGUE

Language is not equipped to express knowledge or to define the meaningless.

Rational language came to a dead end.

It could not express the inexpressible.

It has been reduced to making trivial statements.

Language irrelevant to existential problems

The use of circular and repetitious form communicates the lack of ontological meaning in life.

Absurd theatre shows that language is not equipped to express knowledge or to define the meaningless,

IONESCO

Words, having no profound meaning, become interchangeable objects.

Language is depersonalising and automatic.

Language is irrelevant to existential problems.

Ionesco derides language.

He uses vacuous discussion about unimportant matters.

His plays abound in nonsense phrases.

He indulges in a meaningless association of words.

Language often breaks down completely – climatic paroxysm

Ionesco uses language in a gestural manner – to express an idea by its total pattern or impact rather than its rational meaning.

Language undermines itself.

BECKETT

He used strong rhythmic progression or canters.

Frequent use of pauses isolates words.

Speech when silence becomes unbearable

Beckett relied on an imagistic impact rather than on logical structure.

Created a poetic dialogue with melodic, rhythmic and associative potential.

THEMATIC CONCERNS

These plays present the author's intuition of the human condition.

It is part of the movement that needed to break out of the narrow and detailed representational confines of naturalistic theatre.

It displays an intense concern with the inner self that marked the dead end of the humanistic tradition.

Man now finds himself in a world devoid of purpose.

God, science, material progress – all seem to have failed, leaving a vacuum filled with existential angst.

Man seems to be lacking any sense of deep human purpose with which to fill the vacuum of self in a meaningless universe.

Absurd theatre suggests an acceptance of the reality of human existence however harsh it may be.

It advocates an accommodation of the truth of nothingness so that man may live positively with it.

Dramatic forms attempted to mirror the fragmentation of contemporary life and reflect the search for meaning.

Beckett conveys the experience of endless waiting and futility.

ABSURD USE OF SPACE

The stage, which had been reduced by Realism to represent a small slice-of-life, returned to its earlier image as a metaphor for the world itself in Absurd Theatre.

The stage is stripped to its bare minimum – symbolic of a void, simple and stark.

The theatrical image conveys the experience of absurdity.

The world/room are contained spaces, devoid of meaning.

Space is either infinite or totally confining.

Beckett's space conveys a sense of oppressive emptiness.

Ionesco's space is more cluttered but the feeling is the same: impenetrable meaning, created by a wall of things.

Whatever the specific setting, it is what the fact of space says rather than what space is made to represent, that gives atmospheric quality to Absurd Theatre.

QUESTION 2 BRECHTIAN THEATRE

Learners must discuss the THREE dramatic principles listed 3x10=30

Six marks for relevant information pertaining to a Brechtian text

Three marks for awareness of alienation techniques to prompt the audience to reflect on the action

One mark for logical presentation

The following information could be used as a guideline for the kind of information that should be addressed.

ALIENATION

The function of Brecht's theatre was political, and had to be viewed with a critical objectivity.

Alienation, otherwise known as "distancing" and in German *Verfremdungseffekt*, is possibly the most important part of Brecht's dramatic theory.

It is directly related both to the political intention of his theatre and to his sense of "Aristotelian" theatre.

Brecht rejected the Aristotelian idea of a common humanity with a collective response to the emotions in a play – a human spirit, timeless and unchanging.

Brecht did not reject the place of emotion in human life and in theatre.

Nor did he exclude pleasure and entertainment as a function of theatre. But the pleasure was not to be gained through narcotic emotional self-indulgence.

It was not emotion per se that Brecht excluded, but the empathy that it produces.

The function of the effect is not, as has sometimes been interpreted, to attack or offend the audience.

Brecht wants his audience to be at one with the event, in such a way that the interaction raises its critical consciousness.

A critical attitude is not a negative one, it is socially active and practical.

Alienation has the function of freeing socially conditioned phenomena from the stamp of familiarity.

Alienation draws attention to the familiar by showing it in a new light.

EPISODIC STRUCTURE

Epic theatre employs a narrative not linked to time.

It displays a loosely linked series of events – episodes.

Brecht used the term *epic* for his theatre in the German sense of the word: a narrative not tied to time.

It did not necessarily have the connotation of a heroic scale, but simply the idea of a loosely linked series of events.

It moves in an episodic manner.

While making a thematic whole, each episode of the epic is complete in itself, illustrating one specific aspect of the totality.

The spectator can reflect upon this, as he is not anxious to press on to discover how the story ends.

There is no story in a plot sense.

Like Shakespeare, he used whatever suited his needs to create a nuclear form moving on several levels of time, space, and narrative at once.

What resulted was a clear, coolly delineated chain of events presenting a body of evidence from which socio-political lessons might be drawn in a detached and lucid manner.

The episodic structure, calculated to break the audience's emotional continuity and thus its empathy, had a strongly dialectical basis.

The thesis-antithesis structure of an argument was present in the relationship of scenes.

HISTORIFICATION

Brecht insisted upon the historification of his theatre – the setting of its events in the past.

This was again in the cause of alienation.

Historification will shut off the conditioning forces of society and allow the audience to sit back and critically consider events placed in the past.

However, these events will have significant connections with the present circumstances.

Alienation has the function of freeing socially conditioned phenomena from the stamp of familiarity.

Alienation draws attention to the familiar by showing it in a new light.

COSTUME AND PROPERTIES

Though Brecht didn't operate on any kind of realistic premise in his use of space, he took extreme care that costumes and properties create the correct socio-economic impression.

Simplicity and selectivity were, again, two principles on which he operated, but to these were added a strong functional and utilitarian sense.

Brecht wished each scene, or episode, of his plays to have a basic tonal gestus. This developed with the play to underscore the total gestus, or thematic idea.

Costumes had to show the evidence of wear, and the props were not realistic but in fact real. Brecht would have them made not by theatre technicians but by actual craftsmen,

The simple, well-worn human artefact appealed to his sense of man's dignity and aspirations seen in a social and historical context.

He was as careful over the correct use of properties as he was of the correct performance of work on stage: scenes of building, cooking, mending and other basic human tasks had to be done with workmanlike accuracy.

Work, the economic produce of labour, was, after all, at the basis of Marxist philosophy.

Brecht's emphasis upon the correct detail of costuming and properties was due to their direct social and economic function within his theatre.

As props and costumes relate so specifically to character, the way in which they are worn or used can make them part of a character's gestus.

GESTIC CHARACTERISATION

In epic theatre an actor will build his part from a social perspective.

He is not looking for emotional, psychological, or metaphysical motivations for action, but for the social gist of his part.

The actor must examine his part carefully to discover the political dialectics of the play, and the function his own character has in the presentation of the theme.

Rather than try to develop an emotional persona for the character, or write up an imaginary biography of his past, an actor should make a skeletal outline of the events and action of the play and underline where his part fits in.

Look for the socially determined insights and impulses and establish the modal points of the character's function in the story.

Ask of the character: What happens to him? How does he respond? What opinions does he express and confront?

The basis of physical characterisation is gestus. This is both a physical attitude and a point of view.

The physicality embodies meaning in a precise, almost hieroglyphic way.

The starting point is an external one, not arising from generalised aspects of human behaviour, but from those physical elements that will delineate a socio-political individual in a specific time, place, and class structure.

Strongly defined body rhythms and centres of energy are fundamental to the delineation of character gestus.

SPACE AND SETTING

The use of space both accommodates and reinforces the epic qualities of the plays.

It allows for episodic change and a wide sweep of events – being essentially unlocalised and unspecific, after the tradition both of the medieval stage and the Elizabethan theatre.

There is no attempt to create a realistic illusion.

Everything about the staging is practical and utilitarian.

These environments support the function of Brecht's theatre as an arena in which a dialectical action is fought out for the education of the spectators.

In his conscious undermining of illusion Brecht did not attempt to disguise any of the theatrical apparatus of his stage.

His lights were ungelled, and the instruments shown hanging on their pipes.

Scaffolding was often employed rather than solid scenery.

The whole use of scenic space advertised that this was not an imitation of life; this was a theatre, and one that was an intellectual workshop.

The direct relationship between the epic form, the didactic, intention, and the spatial dynamics of the theatre was reinforced by Brecht's use of screens, titles, projection, slides – all the technological paraphernalia of a scientific age.

Items that today would be known as teaching aids are used by Brecht to serve the didactic purpose of his theatre.

Breaking illusion meant, for Brecht, alienating emotional empathy to produce in the audience the critically engaged attitude of the student or of the spectator at a sporting event who is judging the quality of the play and the technical expertise of the players.

The space is a classroom, the set is a teaching aid, and the actor is an instructor.

QUESTION 3 SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE

PAPER W

Learners are expected to discuss TWO typically South African characters as found in the SA text that they prepared for the examination: 2x5=30

Learners could use the "formula": physical, social, moral and psychological characteristics: 4x3=12

Three marks are allocated to learners who show an awareness of South African elements in socio-political background to each of the characters.

PAPER V

Learners are expected to discuss a theme or themes that address the socio-political background of the time in which they were created: 15 marks

Learners must also discuss two or more characters that were affected by the socio-political aspects that prevailed at the time when the play was written.

QUESTION 4 OWN CHOICE PLAY

PAPER W

Discuss the major and minor themes that the play addresses: 30 marks

PAPER V

Discuss characterisation using the "formula": 15 marks
Discuss dialogue with reference to the play: 15 marks

SECTION B – SPEECH [40]

5.1 Breathing

The performer needs sufficient, controlled, supported breath: air exhaled under controlled pressure so that vocal folds vibrate without disturbances

Central diaphragmatic breathing = ideal, most efficient, full capacity, can be controlled by action of diaphragm, stomach and back muscles

Achieve quick, efficient inhalation

Strengthen the diaphragmatic and intercostals muscles

Release the lower body (stomach/pelvic floor) so that the diaphragm can do its work

Connect the sound with the breath.

Refer to working on the chosen text while discussing the breathing process.

Mark allocation:

5 marks for discussion of breathing process

5 marks for reference to text

5.2 Pause

Mention at least THREE kinds of pauses and explain their purpose:

Breathing pause – to allow intake of breath at the end of a long sequence

Pause for effect – to enhance mood

Dramatic pause – to create a certain expectation

Sense pause – to assist intelligibility / meaning

5.3 Relaxation and posture

The body needs to be freed from any unnecessary tension.

A neutral posture should be achieved so that voice work can occur without the hindrance of tension; this step is important in order to combat performance nerves.

In order to relax you need to explore your own body and identify your personal habits and ways of dealing with tension.

Some of you may tense up in the shoulder area while others lock the knees.

Once you have identified your own habits, you must work on the release of set habits towards the relaxed state that will enhance vocal support

This will more often than not mean that you have to exercise daily (20 minutes minimum) in order to release tension habits.

The support that you need in order to empower your voice comes from breathing correctly.

Relaxation does not imply going to sleep – this should be an energising start to the warm-up.

Discuss any suitable relaxation exercises.

Mark allocation:

5 marks for comments on the relaxed state

5 marks for description of suitable posture

5.4 Volume and projection

Volume is created by bringing the vocal folds open, greater energy is released.

Pressure from the breath stream builds up; the vocal folds open, greater energy is released.

Avoid breathiness; ensure firm glottal closure, without a harsh attack.

Projection = actor must always be heard, regardless of the space in which he is working or the length of the phrases he must utter, but must not shout, hurt/strain voice

Actors need sufficient, controlled, supported breath.

The air is exhaled under controlled pressure so that vocal folds vibrate without disturbances.

Central diaphragmatic breathing = ideal, most efficient, full capacity, can be controlled by action of diaphragm, stomach and back muscles

5.4 Articulation

Building structural and consonantal energy; improving clarity, forcefulness, energy, muscularity, economy, precision of speech; improving audibility; warming the organs of articulation

Clear articulation: must articulate actively; mouth must be open (jaw released); sound projected to the front of the mouth (hard palate, alveolar ridge) = sounding board

5.5 Resonance

Resonance: amplification and modification of tone by means of vibrations in body

Achieving a free, rounded, rich, interesting voice which is capable of creating different qualities, pitches and volumes; building tonal energy; developing a responsive voice in terms of freedom of pitch and inflection, changing qualities

Good resonance is achieved when different resonators resonate at the same frequency; occurs on vowel sounds, which carry emotion, and on continuant consonants

Mark allocation:

5 marks for an explanation of the terms

5 marks for reference to the particular demands of the text of your choice.

MARKS: 3X10=30

SECTION C STAGING

QUESTION 6

Learners may select any of the **FOUR stage types**: Proscenium, thrust, arena or found space.

- Describe the dimensions of the stage.
- Justify the choice.
- Give some indication of a set.
- Place set pieces showing an awareness of sight lines.
- Indicate acting area.

Mark allocation: 5x4=20

QUESTION 7

Mention 4 props that might be found in the play that the learner chooses to discuss

Describe each of the 4 props.

Mark allocation: 4x5=20

TOTAL MARKS FOR THIS PAPER: 150