

GCSE DRAMA Live Theatre (final section of written examination) task sheets.

The written examination section C, involves completing a full written response evaluating a live production you have seen. We have already produced an initial written draft evaluating the live performance of 'Border./Macbeth.

Introduction: Reminders of the task

Regardless of how much you enjoyed the play, you must be able to show that you have understood the contribution of the actors and that you can analyse and evaluate their work.

In order to write well about the production, it will help if you are familiar with:

- The plot and the characters
- The features of the style/genre of the production
- The context of the production

Task 1: Review the plot and the characters in the live performance of 'Border' or Macbeth. As this information needs to be learned/revised in order to be re-produced as an essay, constant revision will be helpful. You can do this by:

- Re-reading your copy of Border if you have it.
- Researching the synopsis of Macbeth online, if this is your chosen production.
- Re-reading the synopsis of Border below from the Theatre Centre resources pack.

The Border by Afsaneh Gray: What's it about?

The Border is a high energy, outrageous Brechtian parable that explores the lines we draw between ourselves and other people, and the absurdities of borders.

Life is turned upside down in one small town as East Oolia shuts the border with West Oolia, dividing here from there, us from them, this from that despite all the fruit tasting the same. In the midst of it all, Stranger, a young girl's beloved dog, has gone missing. Will Stranger be found before the border closes, or will she be trapped forever on the "wrong" side? With rumours of dog theft and whispers of runaway immigration, how far will the mayor dare to go in her fight for re-election? Does the refugee boy hold the clue to Stranger's disappearance? As the bickering and bartering over boundaries moves into the eleventh hour, will one young girl change the course of history in her quest to find her dog? The Border is a high energy, outrageous Brechtian parable from Theatre Centre that explores the lines we draw between ourselves and other people and the absurdities of borders. The Border will feature original songs and a live break-out debate where one girl, her dog, and the audience find their voice – and their bark. "Woof!"

The Border Scene Descriptions

Scene 1: In which Julia tries to persuade her family to help her find her dog

Scene 2: In which Julia tries to get across to West Oolia to find Stranger

Scene 3: In which Julia meets a migrant and accuses him of stealing her dog

Scene 4: In which Julia tries to hide the fate of Grandma's fruit

Scene 5: In which REFUGEE BOY tries to get his brother out of West Oolia

Scene 6: In which Julia tries to persuade the MAYOR to help her find STRANGER

Scene 7: In which Julia decides to help REFUGEE BOY

Scene 8: In which Julia tries to get her phone back

Scene 9: In which Julia tries to guarantee her mother's job

Scene 10: In which Julia tries to condense her views about the border into one-hundred and forty characters including spaces

Scene 11: In which REFUGEE BOY makes a life-changing decision...

Scene 12: In which Julia tries to get REFUGEE BOY to eat a biscuit

Scene 13: In which REFUGEE BOY tries to persuade SMUGGLER to take STRANGER back

Scene 14: In which Julia tries to avoid the Town Hall debate

Scene 15: In which Julia takes a stand

Scene 16: In which Julia tries to bring everyone together over stew

Task 2: Review the features of the style/genre of the production

Both Macbeth and Border are Epic theatre productions. Review the style by reading information about Brecht from the Theatre Centre resource pack.

Brecht the practitioner

Bertolt Brecht was a German poet, playwright, and theatre practitioner. Brecht's ideas about how theatre should be made have impacted generations of theatre makers and continue to inspire people today.

Brecht once said, "Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it." He didn't want his audience to get wrapped up in the emotion on stage and forget about real life, instead he wanted spectators to make judgements on the social issues presented in his plays. Brecht believed for this to happen his audience must know they are watching a piece of theatre, not real life which is what Stanislavsky's naturalism tried to do. Brecht's ideas on theatre were revolutionary at the time and they continue to be studied and used around the world today, including here at Theatre Centre. The Border is a Brechtian inspired parable and many of the exercises the director used in rehearsal were Brecht's.

Brecht as a theatre practitioner

Brecht popularised the idea of epic theatre which exposed the mechanisms of theatre to make the spectator aware that they are watching a play, in contrast to Stanislavsky's immersive naturalism where the audience were asked to believe what was on stage was 'real'. Brecht believed that his audience should be made to think not feel. He didn't want his audience to identify with the actors and feel empathy for the characters on stage, instead he wanted the spectator to think objectively about the play, reflect on its arguments and draw conclusions. To do this Brecht used the alienation effect (Verfremdungseffekt) which helped distance the audience from empathising with the characters and being caught up in their emotional lives.

Brecht the practitioner

Key Facts

Born: February 10, 1898, Augsburg, Germany

Died: August 14, 1956, East Berlin

Who was Bertolt Brecht? He was a German poet, playwright, and theatre practitioner.

What plays did Brecht write? Brecht wrote a number of plays including Mother Courage and Her Children (1939), The Life of Galileo (1939), The Good Person of Setzuan (1942), and The Caucasian Chalk Circle (1945) which are celebrated as modern classics.

What is Epic Theatre? Epic Theatre, unlike dramatic theatre, does not demand empathy from the audience. Epic Theatre presents an argument, a clear political statement, and asks the audience to remain objective, to reflect on the play's arguments and draw conclusions. Epic Theatre breaks the fourth wall as a way to distance the audience from emotionally investing in the characters on stage.

What is verfremdungseffekt? Verfremdungseffekt translates into 'distancing' and is often known as the alienation effect or 'v' effect. Brecht wanted to distance his audience from empathising with the characters. There are lots of different ways in which to use 'v' effect.

Examples of 'v' effect: Narration, actors coming out of role, speaking stage directions, direct audience address, using placards, multi-rolling, split-role, minimal set, costume and props, symbolic props, as well as technical tools such as lighting and sound.

What is Spass? Spass translates as 'fun'. Brecht wanted his audience to think, and his theatre always included a message he wanted his audience to take away, but this didn't mean his work would be serious and boring. Brecht used comedy to break the emotional tension onstage and challenge his audience on an issue. Spass could come in the form of slapstick, stand-up routine, comic exaggeration, or physical comedy. If the audience laugh at a character's despair or a very serious moment because of the use of Spass, then they will also question why they are laughing.

What is Gestus? Gestus is a movement performed by the actor to express a moment, attitude, or social comment to the audience. Brecht wanted his character's movements to reveal their, social role and have the audience question what type of person they represent. Brecht's characters often represent archetypes in society such as the Boss, the Judge, and the Girl. In rehearsals Brecht would photograph his actors and study these photos to ensure their movements were expressing what he wanted.

Task 3: Review the context of the production and how you saw it.

*The **themes and situation** in the play Border:

a. Borders are a very current and decisive topic in 2019 and not just in the UK. If you want to explore the topic of borders, you might find the video below useful.

BBC - The new virtual country with no borders

<https://www.bbc.com/ideas/videos/the-new-virtual-country-with-no-borders/p06p674h>

b. The play is set in a fictional country which seems British. Why do you think this is?

- The **production**- make sure you identify and explain the following.
 - a. The fact this is a touring production and has to adapt to lots of different venues, with minimum set.
 - b. Cast of four performers.
 - c. This is targeted at a teenage audience as it is a Theatre in Education piece, ie. links to current affairs.

Task 4: Writing about the performers. Read the following information.

The tasks on the previous examination have required candidates to analyse and evaluate **one** performer's contribution in the whole play, **or** performers contribution to a certain scene or section. Therefore, you need to be able to prepare for either task.

You will also need to use precise acting details and analyse their intended effect as well as then evaluating if this effect was achieved. These acting details must cover:

- Use of voice
- Use of physical skills
- Use of space
- Characterisation.

Depending on the style of the play, you may observe different performance conventions such as direct audience address, and audience interaction.

Vocal Skills

- Accent
- Volume
- Tone
- Pitch
- Timing/pace
- Phrasing
- Emotional range

[Examples and effects of vocal skills \(this will help to understand the skill further\)](#)

Task 5: Use the chart below to identify and analyse the vocal skills you observed, although there are many other variations. Your performer may also have not used all of these. Then think of the effects they achieve (analysis) For example, if the performer shouts the effect may be that they are showing their authority or fear. Add these to your reviews. If you are unable to recall and you have studied 'Border' see the email link to this video.

Vocal Skill	Example	Possible effect
Accent	1. Strong regional accent	
	2. Neutral Accent	
	3. Strong national accent	
Volume	1. Speaks loudly/shouts	
	2. Speaks softly/whispers	
	3. Voice suddenly gets louder or softer	
Pitch	1. Uses high voice	
	2. Uses a low voice	
	3. Changes pitch	
	4. Changes pitch to imitate another character	
Timing/Pace	1. Speaks slowly	
	2. Speaks quickly	
	3. Pauses at particular moments	
	4. Speaks at a different or the same tempo (speed) as another character	
Tone	1. Speaks warmly or tenderly	
	2. Speaks sharply or aggressively	
	3. Emphasises certain words	
Phrasing	1. Hesitates at the beginning of a line or mid line	
	2. Emphasises a certain word	
	3. Disguises words 'throwing line or word away'	
Emotional Range	1. Voice breaks/sobs	
	2. Giggles or laughs while speaking	
	3. Speaks with control (such as attempting to control anger or sorrow)	
	4. Speaks childishly	
	5. Screams	

Task 6: Practice writing about vocal skills.

Read the responses to actors' performances below and decide if the actors, through their use of vocal skills have created a **serious** or a **comic** effect. (Answers at the end of the task sheets)

Example 1

The actor's voice suddenly broke and there was a long pause as if he was unable to continue. After a second, he softly said, 'She was my daughter.' He emphasised the word 'was' showing that it was in the past and said 'daughter' tenderly making it clear that his daughter was no longer alive.

Example 2

The two actors worked in a tight partnership. Their dialogue consisted of a series of rapid-fire exchanged. The actor playing Rob used his lower register and had a booming voice, while Jenny's voice was higher pitched and more cutting. Their use of their voices in the trial scene was very confident and the characters acted as if they were experience court officials, but when they suddenly paused and looked blankly at each other and then at the audience, it was clear that they were talking nonsense. Together they asked persistent, forceful questions of the defendant, but their mispronunciation of longer words showed how silly they were.

Performers' physical interpretation

Task 7: Use the chart below to identify and analyse the **physical** skills you observed, although there are many other variations. Your performer may also have not used all of these. Then think of the effects they achieve (analysis) For example, if the performer shows they are restraining another by protectively putting an arm around another's waist.

	Example	Possible effect
Gait (way of walking)	1. Graceful	
	2. Limp/stagger	
	3. Awkwardly	
	4. Hurriedly	
	5. Slow/shuffling	
Posture	1. Upright	
	2. Hunched	
	3. Stiff	
	4. Off centre/crooked	
Gesture	1. Pointing/wagging finger	
	2. Outstretched arms	
	3. Wringing hands/prayer	
	4. Closed gestures/stop/dismissive	
	5. Open/greeting/wave/invite	
Facial Expression	1. Smiling/giggle/open laughter	
	2. Sad	
	3. Scowl/Disgust	
	4. Open mouthed- shock	
	5. Disapproving/pursed lips	
	6. Tense	
Tone	4. Speaks warmly or tenderly	
	5. Speaks sharply or aggressively	
	6. Emphasises certain words	
Body Language/interaction	1. Open- towards others/eye contact	
	2. Closed- wrapped arms/ turn away/no eye contact	
	3. Close proximity	
	4. Distant proximity	
	5. Mannerism	

Task 8: Other considerations.

If any of the following were also used by the performer, add to your draft or notes.

- How the performer entered and exited the scene
- How the performer used props
- How the performer used the set (chairs for example)
- How the performer used the costume
- How the performer changed into a different character, using acting skills (age, physicality etc)
- How the performer maintained the character

Task 9: You should have been emailed a couple of links to digital theatre, The National Theatre. Follow these links to watch the recommended productions that you can watch and consider what the performers have used. This is for practice only as you can only write about a live production you have seen.

Answers to Task 6:

Example A is serious and Example B is comic.