

Introduction to Edexcel A-Level Drama and Theatre Studies

The [Edexcel A-Level Drama and Theatre Studies](#) course is an engaging and dynamic program designed for students with a passion for performance, theatre production, and critical analysis of dramatic texts. This course not only enhances practical acting skills but also provides an in-depth understanding of theatre history, production techniques, and the socio-political contexts of influential plays.



Course Structure and Assessment

The A-Level Drama and Theatre Studies course is divided into several key components, each focusing on different aspects of theatre and performance. The assessment consists of both practical and written exams, ensuring a well-rounded evaluation of students' abilities and understanding.

- 1. Component 1: Devising (40% of the qualification)**
 - **Content:** Students create an original performance piece using one key extract from a performance text and a theatre practitioner as stimuli.
 - **Assessment:** This component is internally assessed and externally moderated. Students must maintain a portfolio documenting the creative process and an evaluation of the final performance.
- 2. Component 2: Text in Performance (20% of the qualification)**
 - **Content:** This practical component involves performing a monologue or duologue and participating in a group performance of a key extract from a performance text.
 - **Assessment:** An external examiner assesses these performances.
- 3. Component 3: Theatre Makers in Practice (40% of the qualification)**
 - **Content:** This written exam requires students to analyze and interpret two set texts and evaluate a live theatre performance they have seen.
 - **Assessment:** The written exam consists of three sections: a live theatre evaluation, practical exploration, and interpretation of a set text from the perspective of a performer, designer, and director.

Set Texts: *Lysistrata* and *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*

Lysistrata by Aristophanes

"*Lysistrata*" is a classic Greek comedy by Aristophanes that explores themes of war, peace, and gender politics. The play is set during the Peloponnesian War and follows the protagonist, Lysistrata, as she unites the women of Greece to withhold sexual privileges from their husbands until they agree to negotiate peace. This humorous yet poignant text allows

students to explore the use of satire and farce, as well as the societal roles and expectations of women in ancient Greece.

Key Points:

- Examination of comedic elements and their impact on the audience.
- Analysis of the socio-political commentary within the play.
- Exploration of the characters' motivations and relationships.

Accidental Death of an Anarchist by Dario Fo

"Accidental Death of an Anarchist" is a farce by Italian playwright Dario Fo that critiques political corruption and police brutality. The play is inspired by the real-life events surrounding the death of an Italian anarchist, who fell from a police station window under suspicious circumstances. Through its absurdist humour and sharp wit, the play offers a powerful commentary on authority and justice.

Key Points:

- Understanding the historical and political context of the play.
- Analyzing the use of farce and satire to convey serious themes.
- Examining the structure and style of the play, including its use of breaking the fourth wall and direct address.

The Written Exam Content

Component 3: Theatre Makers in Practice - Written Exam

The written exam for Component 3 of the Edexcel A-Level Drama and Theatre Studies is divided into three sections. Each section assesses different aspects of students' understanding and analysis of theatre. Here's a detailed description of each section and the requirements for students:

Section A: Live Theatre Evaluation

Objective:

- To evaluate a live theatre performance that the students have seen.

Requirements:

- **Content:**
 - **Description:** Provide a brief description of the performance, including the title of the play, the company or director, and the venue.
 - **Analysis:** Critically analyse specific aspects of the performance, such as acting, set design, lighting, sound, costume, and directorial choices.
 - **Evaluation:** Discuss the effectiveness of these elements in conveying the intended themes and engaging the audience.

- **Personal Response:** Reflect on your personal response to the performance and justify your opinions with specific examples from the production.

Skills Assessed:

- Ability to observe and critically evaluate live theatre.
- Clear articulation of personal and critical insights.
- Use of appropriate terminology and evidence to support analysis.

Section B: Page to Stage: Realising a Performance Text

Objective:

- To demonstrate understanding of how to interpret and realize a set text for performance from the perspective of a performer and a designer.



Requirements:

- **Set Texts:** One of the prescribed set texts (e.g., "Lysistrata" by Aristophanes)
- **Content:**
 - **Performer's Perspective:**
 - **Character Analysis:** Provide an in-depth analysis of a specific character, including motivations, relationships, and development throughout the play.
 - **Performance Techniques:** Discuss the acting techniques and strategies you would use to portray the character effectively.
 - **Designer's Perspective:**
 - **Design Concept:** Explain your design concept for a key aspect of the production (e.g., set, costume, lighting, or sound).
 - **Implementation:** Describe how this design concept would be implemented to enhance the performance and support the director's vision.

Skills Assessed:

- Understanding of textual interpretation and character development.
- Ability to apply practical performance techniques.
- Creative thinking in developing and explaining design concepts.
- Effective communication of ideas using appropriate theatre terminology.

Section C: Interpreting a Performance Text

Objective:

- To explore how a complete performance text can be interpreted and brought to life for an audience from the perspective of a director.

Requirements:

- **Set Texts:** One of the prescribed set texts (e.g., "Accidental Death of an Anarchist" by Dario Fo)
- **Content:**
 - **Directorial Vision:** Articulate a clear directorial vision for the entire play, considering themes, style, and intended impact on the audience.
 - **Staging and Blocking:** Discuss your approach to staging and blocking key scenes, including the use of space and movement.
 - **Character Direction:** Describe how you would direct actors in specific scenes to achieve desired character portrayals and interactions.
 - **Design Integration:** Explain how you would integrate design elements (set, lighting, costume, sound) to support your directorial vision.



Skills Assessed:

- Comprehensive understanding of the text and its potential for performance.
- Ability to develop and articulate a coherent directorial vision.
- Practical knowledge of staging, blocking, and directing actors.
- Integration of design elements to create a unified production.

General Tips for Success

- **Time Management:** Allocate time wisely to each section based on the marks available and your strengths.
- **Evidence and Examples:** Always support your analysis and ideas with specific examples from the texts or performances.
- **Terminology:** Use appropriate drama and theatre terminology accurately to demonstrate your understanding.
- **Clarity and Structure:** Write clearly and structure your answers logically, making it easy for the examiner to follow your arguments and insights.

By thoroughly preparing for each section of the written exam, students will be able to demonstrate their analytical, creative, and practical understanding of drama and theatre, showcasing their skills as both practitioners and critics.

Key Skills Developed in the Edexcel A-Level Drama and Theatre Studies Course

The Edexcel A-Level Drama and Theatre Studies course equips students with a broad range of skills that are not only essential for theatre and performance but also transferable to many other fields. Here are the key skills that students will develop throughout the course:

- 1. Performance Skills**
 - **Acting Techniques:** Mastery of various acting methods, including character development, vocal techniques, physicality, and improvisation.
 - **Monologues and Duologues:** Skills in delivering powerful and engaging solo and paired performances.
 - **Group Performances:** Collaboration in ensemble work, enhancing skills in timing, spatial awareness, and interaction with other actors.
- 2. Devising and Creative Skills**
 - **Original Composition:** Creating original performance pieces from scratch, using a range of stimuli and inspiration.
 - **Collaborative Creation:** Working effectively in groups to devise and refine original performances.
 - **Innovative Thinking:** Developing creative solutions and novel ideas for staging and performance.
- 3. Analytical and Critical Thinking**
 - **Textual Analysis:** Deep understanding and interpretation of set texts, including themes, characters, and socio-political contexts.
 - **Performance Evaluation:** Critically evaluating live theatre performances, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.
 - **Research Skills:** Conducting in-depth research to support practical and theoretical work.
- 4. Technical and Design Skills**
 - **Stagecraft:** Knowledge of set design, lighting, sound, and costume, and their impact on a performance.
 - **Technical Operation:** Understanding and operating theatre technology and equipment.
 - **Production Management:** Skills in planning and managing theatre productions, including budgeting and scheduling.
- 5. Communication and Presentation Skills**
 - **Verbal Communication:** Articulating ideas clearly and effectively in discussions, presentations, and performances.
 - **Written Communication:** Producing coherent and insightful written work, including portfolios and essays.
 - **Non-Verbal Communication:** Expressing ideas and emotions through body language, facial expressions, and movement.
- 6. Collaboration and Teamwork**
 - **Interpersonal Skills:** Working effectively with peers, directors, and other theatre practitioners.
 - **Conflict Resolution:** Managing and resolving conflicts within creative teams.
 - **Leadership:** Taking on leadership roles in group projects and guiding collaborative efforts.

7. **Reflective Practice**

- **Self-Evaluation:** Reflecting on personal performance and progress, identifying strengths and areas for development.
- **Feedback Utilization:** Using feedback from teachers and peers to improve work and performances.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Commitment to ongoing learning and improvement in all areas of drama and theatre studies.

8. **Project Management**

- **Time Management:** Effectively planning and managing time to balance practical and theoretical work.
- **Organizational Skills:** Keeping detailed records of rehearsals, research, and creative processes.
- **Goal Setting:** Setting and achieving realistic and challenging goals for both individual and group projects.

By developing these key skills, students are not only prepared for further education and careers in the performing arts but also gain competencies that are valuable in a wide range of professions. The course nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and effective communication, making it an excellent foundation for personal and professional growth.

Summer Research Project:

Create a Presentation based on either **Lysistrata by Aristophanes** or **Accidental death of an anarchist by Dario Fo**. Follow the guidance below on what to include in your presentation. This exercise has been created to introduce you to the set texts we will study over the two years. This is developing your understanding in the social, historical, political and cultural elements of the plays. As well as promoting independent study that is invaluable and required during A-Levels.

- **Objective:** Present research findings and creative ideas to peers and teachers.
- **Format:** 5–10 minute presentation, followed by a Q&A session.
- **Content:**
 - **Overview of Research:** Summarize key points from the research report, focusing on historical context, theatrical styles, and themes.
 - **Creative Ideas:** Present the devised performance piece ideas, character profiles, scene sketches, and design concepts.
 - **Interactive Element:** Engage the audience with a short demonstration or reading of a key scene from the devised piece.

What you should include in your presentation:

- **Historical Context:**
 - **Lysistrata:** Explore the Peloponnesian War, the role of women in ancient Greece, and Aristophanes' use of comedy to comment on social issues.
 - **Accidental Death of an Anarchist:** Investigate the political climate in Italy during the 1970s, the real-life events that inspired the play, and Dario Fo's approach to political theatre.
- **Theatrical Styles:**
 - **Lysistrata:** Analyse the use of satire, farce, and comedic elements. Look into Greek theatre and the performance conditions.
 - **Accidental Death of an Anarchist:** Examine the use of farce, absurdism, and breaking the fourth wall.
- **Themes and Characters:**
 - Create notes on the main themes of both plays, such as political commentary, gender roles, and social justice.
 - Analyse key characters and their development throughout the plays.
- **Conclusion:**
 - Summarise key findings and reflect on how this research will inform future practical work.
 - Is there anything you found in your research that interested you?
 - Do you like the text you research and why?

This work is due the first week of the school year and a schedule will be created in your first lesson back for the presentations. Any questions about the task please contact s.stevens@hughfaringdon.org