Blood Brothers

Play Guide for AQA GCSE Drama

Downloadable Worksheets

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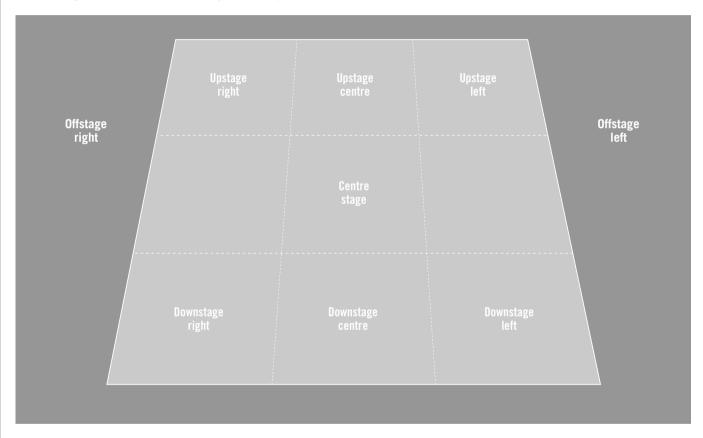


Stage positioning

TASK A1

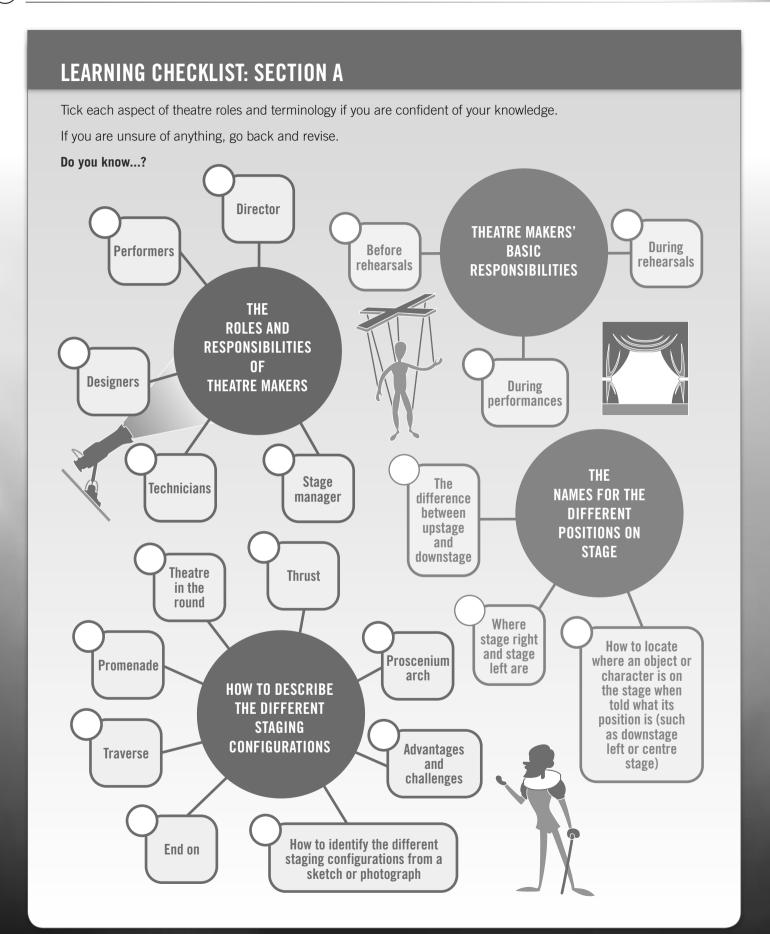
- 1 Imagine you are a set designer and the director has asked you to put the following items on stage:
 - A A wide doorway, upstage centre
 - **B** A pair of chairs and a table, centre stage
 - **C** A small rug, downstage right
 - **D** A window, upstage left
 - **E** A kitchen sink, stage right.

Use the diagram below to note where you would put them.



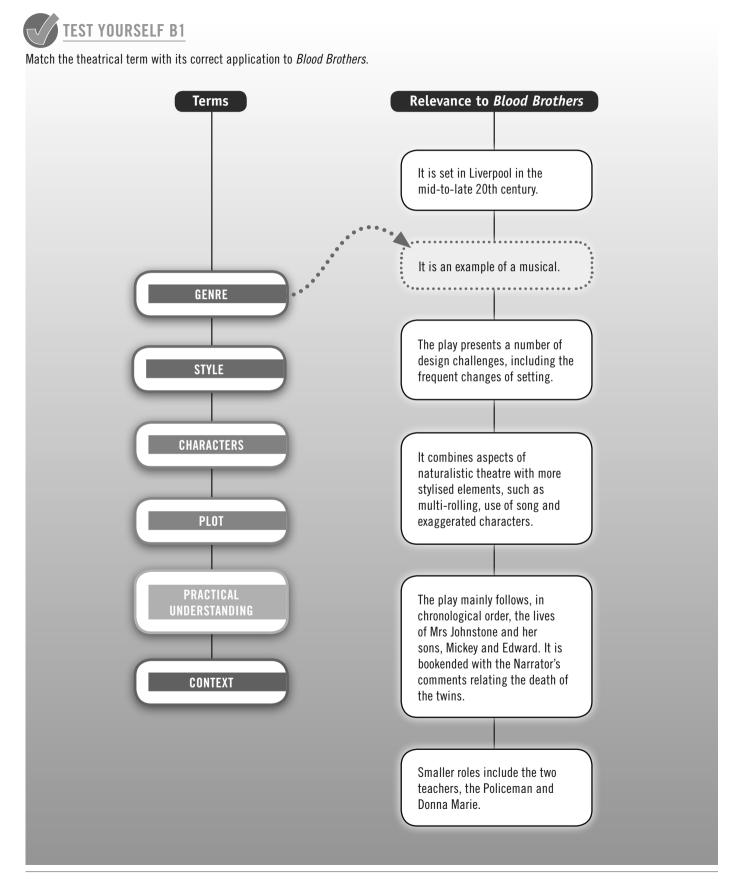
- 2 Now imagine you are an actor and you have been asked to do the following blocking. Note where on the stage you will be each time.
 - **A** Enter through the wide doorway.
 - **B** Make yourself a cup of tea.
 - C Sit down on a chair.
 - **D** Look dreamily out of the window.
 - **E** Stand as close and centrally to the audience as you can.
 - **F** Move as far away from the small rug as you can.
- 3 Copy a new version of the stage space and decide where you would put entrances or the set needed for the final scene of *Blood Brothers* (page 107), when the Policeman tells everyone not to move. Mark on the diagram where the characters are positioned and annotate it with stage directions. For example, if you have put the Narrator downstage to one side, you might write: *Narrator: downstage left* (or *DSL*).





3) p:

The features of drama





When did it happen?

Task B2

Below are 12 key plot points from *Blood Brothers*. Put them in the order in which they occur in the play, numbering them 1 to 12.

When seven-year-old When Mrs Lyons Mickey meets Edward, Mickey and Edward die learns that Mrs they strike up an Johnstone is at the moment they learn immediate friendship, expecting twins, she that they are twins. becoming 'blood asks Mrs Johnstone to brothers'. give one of the babies to her. Mrs Johnstone sings about her past, explaining that by Mrs Lyons attacks Mrs Sammy offers Mickey the age of 25 she had Johnstone because she money to assist with a seven children and was believes she is following robbery, which results in expecting another. her and spoiling her Mickey going to prison. relationship with Edward. When Mrs Johnstone Linda and Mickey take learns that they are Shortly after Linda and a walk in a field, but being moved to a new Mickey marry, he is made Linda storms off when area, she declares it a redundant. Mickey doesn't respond 'bright new day'. to her flirting. Edward arrives at the Johnstone house to Mrs Lyons sees Edward The Narrator invites the say goodbye and Mrs and Linda together and audience to 'judge' Mrs Johnstone gives him a tells Mickey. Johnstone, the workinglocket with a photograph class mother of the twins. of Mickey in it.

Who said that?



Based on your reading of the play and your understanding of the main characters, match each line of dialogue with the correct character.

See if you can remember too in which act each line is spoken.

It's all right. I suppose, I suppose I always... loved you, in a way.

Look... come on... I've got money, plenty of it.

It's your work. Your work has deteriorated.

Edward... how would you like to move to another house?

> But I've ironed him a shirt.

Come on, gang, let's go. We don't wanna play with these anyway. They're just kids.

I sometimes hate our Sammy.

Nothing! Nothing. (Pause.) You bought me off once before...

How they were born, and died, on the selfsame day.

> Take no notice, Mickey. I love you.

God help the girls when you start dancing.

I could have been... I could have been him!

So did y'hear the story of the Johnstone twins?

NARRATOR

Where's me tablets

gone, Linda?

LINDA

SAMMY

MRS LYONS

EDWARD

MRS JOHNSTONE

MICKEY

MR LYONS

Sample answers for Component 1, Section B, Question 1

Focus on Act 2, pages 77–78, from 'As they run off' to 'Mrs Johnstone: He is yours.'

You are designing a costume for Mrs Lyons for a performance of this extract. The costume must reflect the context of Blood Brothers, set in a working-class community during the 1970s. Describe your ideas for the costume.

[4 marks]

Task B22

On the right are two extracts from different student-style responses to the same question. Read them through and highlight or annotate them.

- Next to every mention of context, write C.
- Next to each precise design detail, write D.
- Next to every point which shows understanding of the play and character, write **U**.

Earlier in the play, we saw Mrs Lyons as a neat, affluent middleclass woman. Although her costume in this extract will still reflect clothing that a woman of her status in 1970s Liverpool would choose, there will also be signs of her deteriorating mental health. As she has been 'concealed' in an alley, I would have her wearing a dark-patterned silk headscarf that women often wore during this time to protect their hair from wind and rain. She will also have a good-quality, belted trench coat on over her well-made, conservative woollen dress, suitable for her affluent background. The plain coat will show that she doesn't want to stand out in this unfamíliar neighbourhood. In Mrs Johnstone's kitchen, she will take off the headscarf, revealing that her hair is untidy. She will be wearing less make-up than in earlier scenes. This will help to indicate that she is beginning to lose control.

Mrs Lyons will wear a dark, knee-length tweed skirt and a black, cashmere, long-sleeved jumper. Over this outfit, she will have a loosely belted black coat. These items of clothing are appropriate for a middleclass woman in 1970s Liverpool and for the chilly weather, but the dark colours also suggest her darker mood. This will contrast with the brighter colours of Mrs Johnstone. Mrs Lyons will wear dark-red lipstick, which will look like a gash across her face and hint at her later violence. Her hair will be tightly curled, but not fashionable. It will show that she hasn't moved with the times. She will wear dark leather gloves, which she keeps on, indicating that she doesn't plan to stay long and lending her a menacing appearance.

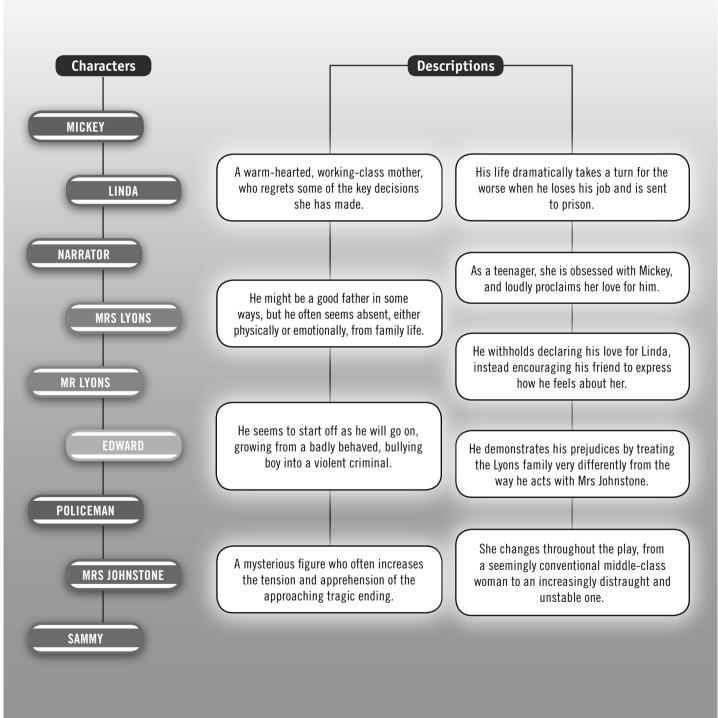


Characterisation



The following simple descriptions of characters from *Blood Brothers* indicate some of the important features that need to be considered when developing characterisations. Match each one with the correct character's name.







Characterisation focus on Mickey and Edward

Task B26

Use the grids below to note the vocal and physical qualities of Mickey and Edward as teenagers and young men. Give at least one precise example when these traits might be noticeable. A few suggestions have been made to get you started.

As teenagers	Mickey	Edward
Posture		
Gestures		Awkward when his mother is teaching him to dance, holding his arms out stiffly as he clumsily tries to remember the steps.
Facial expressions	Avoids eye contact and looks down, embarrassed, as his mother teases him about Linda.	
Vocal volume/pace		
Vocal tone		

As adults	Mickey	Edward
Posture		
Gestures		
Facial expressions		
Vocal volume/pace	Speaks slowly and quietly in most of the pill scene with Linda, due to his depression and use of sedatives.	
Vocal tone		Tries to hide his fear when Mickey appears with a gun by speaking gently and evenly.

Characterisation focus on Mrs Lyons and Mrs Johnstone

Task B29

Complete the following grid, showing acting skills at key points in the play. Some ideas have been suggested for you.

Consider the following vocal and physical skills each time:

- Accent/dialect
- Pauses and pace
- Gestures
- Tone

- Volume
- Gait and posture
- Facial expressions.

Scono/nages	Mrs Johnstone	Mrs Lyons
Scene/pages		
8—9: Mrs Lyons explains that they haven't been able to have children	Vocal skills: Cheerful. Liverpool working-class dialect. Speaks respectfully to her employer. Physical skills:	Vocal skills: Confident, friendly tone. Received pronunciation. Tone of voice is sadder and slower when she explains that she's afraid they can never had children. Physical skills:
22. Mrs Lyons accuses Mrs	Vocal skills:	Physical skills: Vocal skills:
22: Mrs Lyons accuses Mrs Johnstone of selling her baby		vucai skiiis:
	Physical skills:	Physical skills:
78: Mrs Lyons tries to pay Mrs Johnstone to move away	Vocal skills:	Vocal skills:
	Physical skills:	Physical skills:



Experimenting with vocal and physical skills

Task B39

Read the following description of how a performer playing Mickey's teacher (pages 66-67) might play the role. Put a V next to each vocal skill described and a P next to each physical skill. Alternatively, use different-coloured highlighters to show vocal and physical skills.

> As Mickey's teacher, I would use a Lancashire accent, which would suggest the teacher was from near Liverpool, but at a distance that separates him from the students. My delivery would be a dull monotone as I go on about the Amazon Basin, showing why the students don't listen to me more. I would hunch my shoulders and read from a thick book. When I ask questions, I will suddenly look up and point at a child. My voice will get progressively louder and higher as the scene goes on, showing how rattled I am by Mickey's defiance. I will suddenly slam the book down on a desk and glare at Mickey. I will point towards the door, my arm quivering with anger when I shout, 'Out!'

Task B40

Match the character and appropriate scene with the following physical skills. (There might be more than one suitable answer.) Who might...?

- Have a slow shuffling gait Mickey after he gets out of prison.
- Have a lively, bouncy walk
- Lunge with sudden violence
- Avoid making eye contact
- Have an open pleasant smile
- Have a professional, upright stance
- Shake a fist in anger
- Open eyes wide in shock
- Run frantically, panting heavily
- Wring hands anxiously
- Sit comfortably in an armchair, with a glass of whisky in hand.

Interpretations of characters

Task B49

Read the following interpretations of characters, that have been written from the character's perspective. Identify which character's feelings, thoughts and motivations are being expressed. In addition, try to recall scenes or lines of dialogue that might have led to these interpretations.

I'm someone who always tries to look on the bright side. If I dwelt on my problems, I'd never get out of bed! I've got my hands full, having so many children and none of them angels, but I think I've managed pretty well. Sometimes I think back to the day when I made that bargain, but it's no use crying over spilt milk.

My job takes up most of my time. I have a matter-of-fact, business-like way of taking care of tasks, even unpleasant ones like firing people. I have a mild, educated voice and, when at work, show no emotion at all. At home, however, my wife sometimes annoys and worries me and I can snap at her when aggravated. But mainly, I try to keep the peace.

I serve as Mrs Johnstone's conscience and remind her of her terrible deed. I often stand closely behind her, as if whispering in her ear. I sometimes assist her, handing her a coat, for example, as if I am controlling her actions and the progress of the play.

I've been lucky in so many ways, but there was an emptiness in my life because my husband and I couldn't have children. I hid my pain, occupying myself with shopping and making sure my husband came back to a lovely, calm home. Once there was a chance of having a child, however, I became obsessed. I'm not sure I ever had a moment's peace after that fateful exchange.

I adore Mickey and will do anything to get his attention. In school, I lean forward as if trying to kiss him and, later, I embarrass him when he tries to help me.

I don't want to work at conventional jobs and am always looking for a shortcut. I have a powerful personality, so can often get my way by threatening and bullying others, sometimes by pushing them around or shouting at them. I hold my head high and don't try to pretend to be anything other than what I am.



Showing understanding of the play, characters and performance skills

Task B51

Use a grid like this to make notes on key characters at three points in the play.

Character	First key moment	Second key moment	Third key moment	
Mrs Johnstone	First scene with Mrs Lyons	When Mrs Lyons attacks her	At the end of the play, when Mickey confronts Edward	
Interpretation	She is an open, warm character, who is struggling to get by. She tries to make the best of a bad situation.			
Important line	'It's such a lovely house it's a pleasure to clean it.'			
Physical skills She is respectful to Mrs Lyons and wouldn't sit in her presence. She keeps working while she is speaking to her.				
Vocal skills	Strong Liverpool accent, warm, friendly tones.			
Mrs Lyons	When she convinces Mrs Johnstone to give up her baby	When she wants to move away	The attack on Mrs Johnstone	
Interpretation				
Important line				
Physical skills				
Vocal skills				
Mickey	When he first meets Edward	On the field with Linda	Arguing with Linda over the pills	
Interpretation				
Important line				
Physical skills				
Vocal skills				
Edward	When he first meets Mickey	As a teenager, reunited with Mickey	Telling Linda how he feels about her	
Interpretation				
Important line				
Physical skills				
Vocal skills				
Linda	Defending Mickey from Sammy	Sticking up for Mickey at school	Trying to get Mickey to stop taking pills	
Interpretation				
Important line				
Physical skills				
Vocal skills				
Sammy	Trying to bully seven-year-old Mickey	When he robs the bus conductor	When he convinces Mickey to take part in the robbery	
Interpretation				
Important line				
Physical skills				
Vocal skills				
Mr Lyons	When he doesn't want Mrs Lyons to fire Mrs Johnstone	Losing his temper at Mrs Lyons for worrying about Edward	When he fires the employees	
Interpretation				
Important line				
Physical skills				
Vocal skills				



Design ideas for an extract and the whole play

Task B57

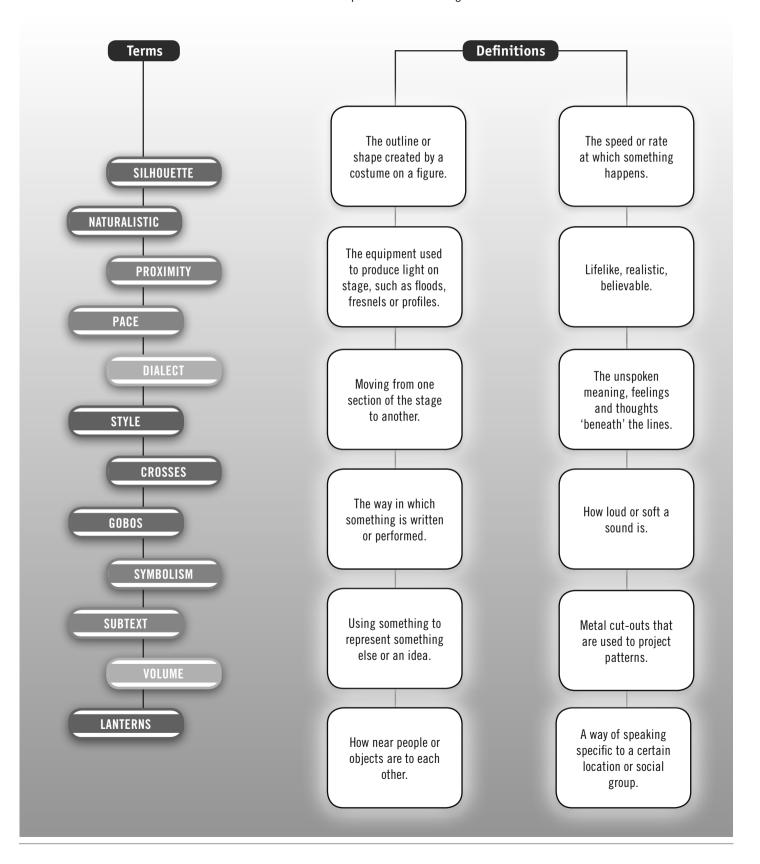
Read Act 2, pages 63–64, from 'The 'bus' appears...' to 'The Conductor rings the bell.' Then complete the following grid with design ideas for each of the specialisms.

	Design ideas and suggested challenges of extract	Examples	Details in extract	Rest of play (pick key moments to discuss in detail)
Costume	Need to establish that Linda and Mickey are young teenagers going to school and Sammy is older and more dangerous.		Fabrics: Colours: Fit/condition: Footwear/accessories:	
Set	Transition from domestic scene to bus. Bus set needs to be quickly created for brief scene. Make sure that the action can be seen.		Staging configuration: Colours: Materials: Levels: Props:	
Lighting	Change from domestic scenes to outdoor and bus lighting. Special lighting used to create the 'bus'.		Colours: Angles/intensity: Special effects: Transitions:	
Sound	Make the transition from domestic setting to bus. Sounds used to establish bus, such as traffic noises, brakes and bell.		Volume: Live or recorded: On stage or off: Transitions:	





Match the correct definition with each technical term used in theatre performance and design.



LEARNING CHECKLIST: SECTION B

 $\label{thm:continuous} \mbox{Tick each aspect of your understanding of $Blood\ Brothers$ if you are confident of your knowledge.}$

If you are unsure of anything, go back and revise.

Do you know...?

How to describe the use of the performance space and character interaction The context of the play, including time period and location

How to plan an answer to an exam question about the set play

How to write about an extract and expand it to the rest of the play, including choosing key moments to discuss in detail How to write about acting skills, including correct terminology

How the context could be reflected by costume, set, sound and lighting design

At least four physical skills actors can use That everyone must answer the first three questions in the exam

At least four vocal skills actors can use

The names of all the characters and their importance to the plot That you will have a choice whether to answer either Question 4 (performance) or 5 (your choice of design specialism)

How to write about design skills, including correct terminology



Analysing costume design, including hair and make-up

Task C14a

Look at the photograph below and annotate it with as many points as you can about:

Fabric Colours Texture Silhouette Make-up



June Moon, Williamstown Theatre Festival



Analysing costume design, including hair and make-up

Task C14b

Look at the photograph below and annotate it with as many points as you can about:

Fabric Colours Texture Silhouette Make-up

Style Context Hair Accessories Condition and fit



Dental Society Midwinter Meeting, Williamstown Theatre Festival



Analysing costume design, including hair and make-up

Task C14c

Look at the photograph below and annotate it with as many points as you can about:

Fabric Colours Texture Silhouette Make-up Style Context Hair **Accessories Condition and fit**



Photo: Steve Tanner / Kneehigh. Designer: Michael Vale

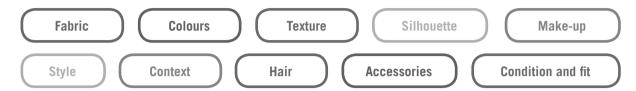
Midnight's Pumpkin, Kneehigh Theatre, Battersea Arts Centre

p100

Analysing costume design, including hair and make-up

Task C15

Use this outline figure to draw in as much detail as you can of a costume you have seen in a play. Annotate it with its various design features as listed in the word bank.







How set design contributes to action, style and context

Task C23

Read the following samples of candidate-style responses about two set designs for two different productions. Note any examples of:

description (D)
 analysis (A)
 evaluation (E).

The set of <u>Summer and Smoke</u>, designed by Tom Scutt, was not the naturalistic type of set many associate with the work of playwright Tennessee Williams. Instead, the design was minimalistic **(a)** and stripped back, showing the bare brick walls of the theatre and a plain floor. Two steps up from the main acting area was a semi-circle of nine pianos around the acting space. These pianos were used by the actors to create music, but also to represent Alma's love of the arts. This choice was highly effective because it removed the clutter which often accompanies naturalistic plays and put the focus on the characters, particularly Alma. The pianos also added excitement to the staging, as actors would perch on top or walk across them or sit down to play them, creating a soundtrack.

The set of <u>Sunset Boulevard</u> recreated Hollywood of the early 20th century. The designer had the difficult task of creating a range of complex sets which had to be moved quickly into place to suggest new locations. (a) Also, as this was a touring production, the set had to fit a wide range of theatres. Norma Desmond's house, with its grand staircase and yellow velvet sofa suggested an earlier era which contrasted with the bright casual diner set where the studio workers met and partied. This made clear the choice Joe would have to make – the dark past with Norma or the bright future with Betty. One element of the design which divided opinion was the use of an incomplete prop-type car. While some didn't like it as it distanced them from the impending tragedy, I felt it worked well because it reflected Norma's inability to separate fantasy from reality. The use of projected films, including Norma as a young girl, was also successful as it reinforced the play's preoccupation with film-making and the distance between Norma as a young woman and how she now appeared.



How lighting contributes to a play's action, style and context

Task C27

Read the following samples of candidate-style responses about two lighting designs. Note any examples of:

description (D)
 analysis (A)
 evaluation (E).

The lighting had an important role to play. The set was minimalistic, so the lighting established the location, time of day and mood of each scene. Instead of employing a general wash of light across the stage, the designer used a combination of profile and fresnel lanterns to focus attention on particular areas of the stage. Barn doors were used on the fresnel lanterns to restrict the spill of light and shape the illumination into tight rectangles, which suggested the claustrophobia of the cabin's rooms. The lighting added to the mystery and tension of the play, as you never knew where you would need to look next. (a) One particularly effective section was the scene when a gentle white light streamed in diagonally from upstage left to suggest the light from a kitchen window as a woman washed dishes. The mood was calm. Then suddenly a pinpoint high-intensity green light snapped onto a strange woman's face outside the window, which made us jump with surprise.

Colour was important in this lighting design. This was particularly noticeable in the fight scene when red filters were introduced and increased in intensity and brightness as the gangs approached each other. When the physical altercation occurred, a strobe was employed. The effect was to plant a series of suspenseful still images in the audience's mind which occurred so quickly we could barely take them in. There would be a flash of light and we would see the group in a huddle, with Joe's arm outstretched. The next flash revealed a knife. Another showed the group pulling away from the centre. The last revealed Joe, apparently dead, on the ground centre stage, in the pool of an intense white spotlight beaming directly down from the lighting rig in the flies. Although it was undoubtedly an exciting use of light, I felt that using red to show violence was a little clichéd, but judging by the audience silence at the end of the sequence, it was clearly effective for others.



How sound design contributes to action, style and context

Task C30

Read the following samples of candidate-style responses about sound design in two different productions. Note any examples of:

description (D)analysis (A)evaluation (E).

In this production of <u>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</u> by Bertolt Brecht, the sound designer used sound to contribute to the epic style of the play. ® Brecht believed that the audience should not think they are watching real-life and used the alienatin effect to remind them they were in a theatre watching actors. The sound design supported this, by showing the actors setting up microphone stands and testing microphones as the audience came in. In the scene by the river, an actor placed a general-use microphone on a low stand next to a bowl of water and created the splashing noises next to the actors enacting the scene. This added to the artificiality of the play's style. Additionally, all the actors played instruments (guitar, drums, tambourine, violin) and sang music which had been specially composed for this performance. This was always done in view of the audience, with the musicians either at the centre of the action or sitting downstage, watching the action. The music was more modern (rock rather than folk) and relevant to the audience than the style more usually associated with Brecht's plays.

In this play, set in an Internet chatroom, music played a vital role. The audience was immediately startled when the characters entered to a recording of the Oompa Loompa song from the 1971 Willy Wonka film. The volume was loud, with speakers at the front of the stage blasting the song out as the actors, dressed in ordinary contemporary clothes, but moving rigidly in time with the music, entered. The effect was odd, making the audience laugh and preparing them for a play which would surprise them repeatedly. The song snapped off and the actors seamlessly began their dialogue. To reinforce the setting, the sound design incorporated a range of recorded notification 'pings' and 'whoosh' sound effects to punctuate the characters' online debates. At the end of the first scene, there was loud burst of the Prodigy's 'Firestarter' song, approximately 20 seconds, which accompanied the actors' 'chairography' as they positioned the chairs for the next scene. This use of sound and music made the production seem modern and relevant, as well as keeping the pace high. (Additionally, the choice of 'Firestarter' added a sense of danger.



TEST YOURSELF C2

Read these responses to different productions and identify whether they are about **performance**, **sound**, **lighting**, **costume** or **set**. Also consider if they describe, analyse or evaluate.

- 1 The use of a revolve contributed greatly to the excitement of the party scene. As it slowly turned, the set revealed a new room in the house. As the party continued, the rooms became more and more cluttered, suggesting that the party was getting out of hand.
- 4 The uniform established the character's status, as well as his appeal to the women of the town. The close-fitting scarlet jacket, with gold braid trim, made him stand out from the other characters who were generally dressed in muted greys, greens and browns.
- 8 Whenever the children entered, a gentle piece of piano music accompanied them, making their scenes seem almost dream-like.
- 11 Columns of lights descended from the fly space. The mystery of the effect was increased by the use of a haze machine, making the light seem thick, like mist.

- 2 From the actor's first entrance, the audience was captivated. To create the recklessness of his character, he hurtled onto the stage, appearing to be wild and, judging by the bottle he was holding, drunk. He suddenly stopped and smiled, enjoying the impression he had made on both the other characters and, slyly, the audience.
- 5 The actors' German accents were truly impressive.
- The audience jumped at the unexpected explosion at the end of Act 1. The speakers were positioned all around the auditorium, creating the effect that we too were caught up in the blast.
- 12 A speaker at the back of the auditorium was used to project the sound of a car driving along a gravel drive.

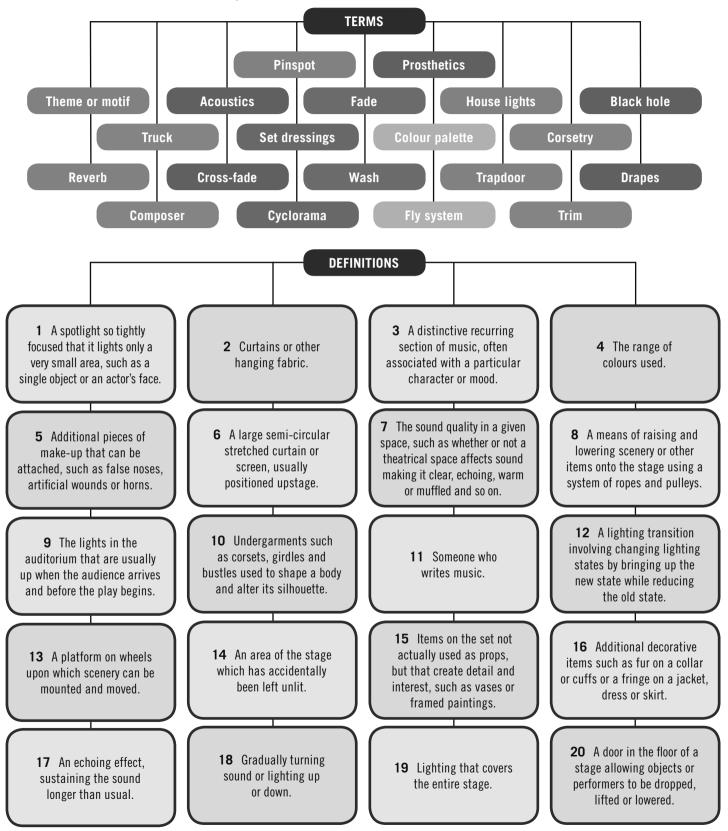
- 3 The use of music from the 1950s highlighted the period of the play.
- A pinpoint spotlight closed in on the actor's face, showing her distressed expression, followed by a sudden blackout that left the audience shocked.
- As a major theme was women's beauty, the designer had made the three-storey set resemble a beauty counter: white smooth reflective, curved surfaces, racks of pastel products and a large white surface upon which advertisements could be projected.
- 10 The outfits were stylised and extravagant: primary colours, exaggerated silhouettes and rich fabrics and decorations.







Match the correct definition with the technical production term.





LEARNING CHECKLIST: SECTION C

Tick each aspect of 'Live theatre production' if you are confident of your knowledge and ability.

If you are unsure of anything, go back and revise.

Do you know...?

The specialisms you could choose to write about

How to select key

moments or sections

to write about

Which characters you might choose to discuss if writing about performance

How to evaluate if the acting or designs are effective The genre, style and period of the play you have seen and how they might affect the acting and design choices

How to describe, analyse and evaluate

Which examples
you could discuss to
demonstrate your
knowledge of design
skills

How to make detailed notes about the production you have seen

The technical terminology appropriate for different specialisms

How to plan an answer to a question asking about a production you have seen

How to describe the impact of the acting or design choices on the audience



LEARNING CHECKLIST: EXAMINATION PRACTICE

Tick each aspect of exam preparation if you are confident of your knowledge.

If you are unsure of anything, read through this section again.

Do you know...?

The difference between your How to look for Section B and key words in the **Section C texts** questions How to avoid running out How to include of time detail and refer to specific examples How to plan an answer How to use discursive markers How to include technical The range of terminology questions you could be asked