

# The 39 Steps

## Play Guide for AQA GCSE Drama

### Downloadable Worksheets

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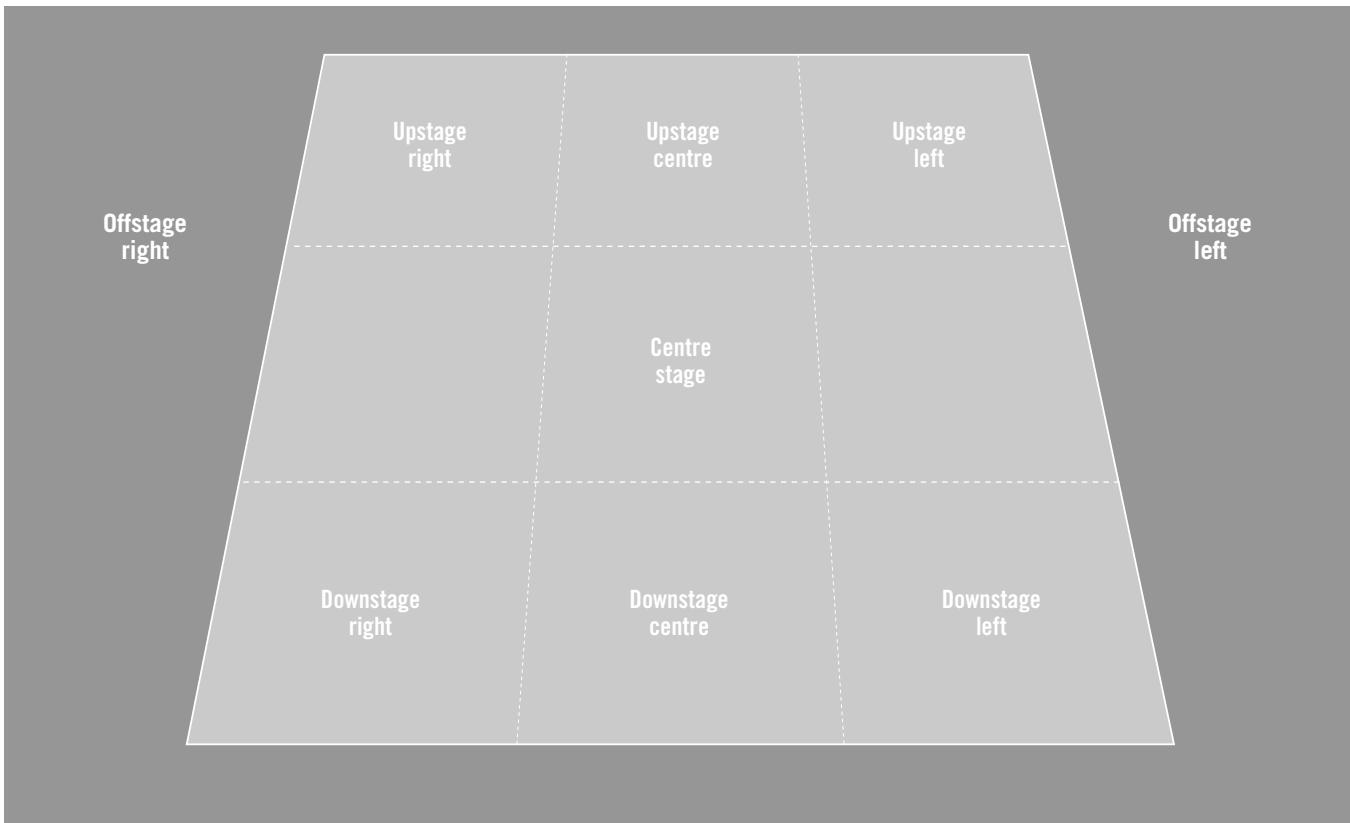
## Stage positioning

### 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.

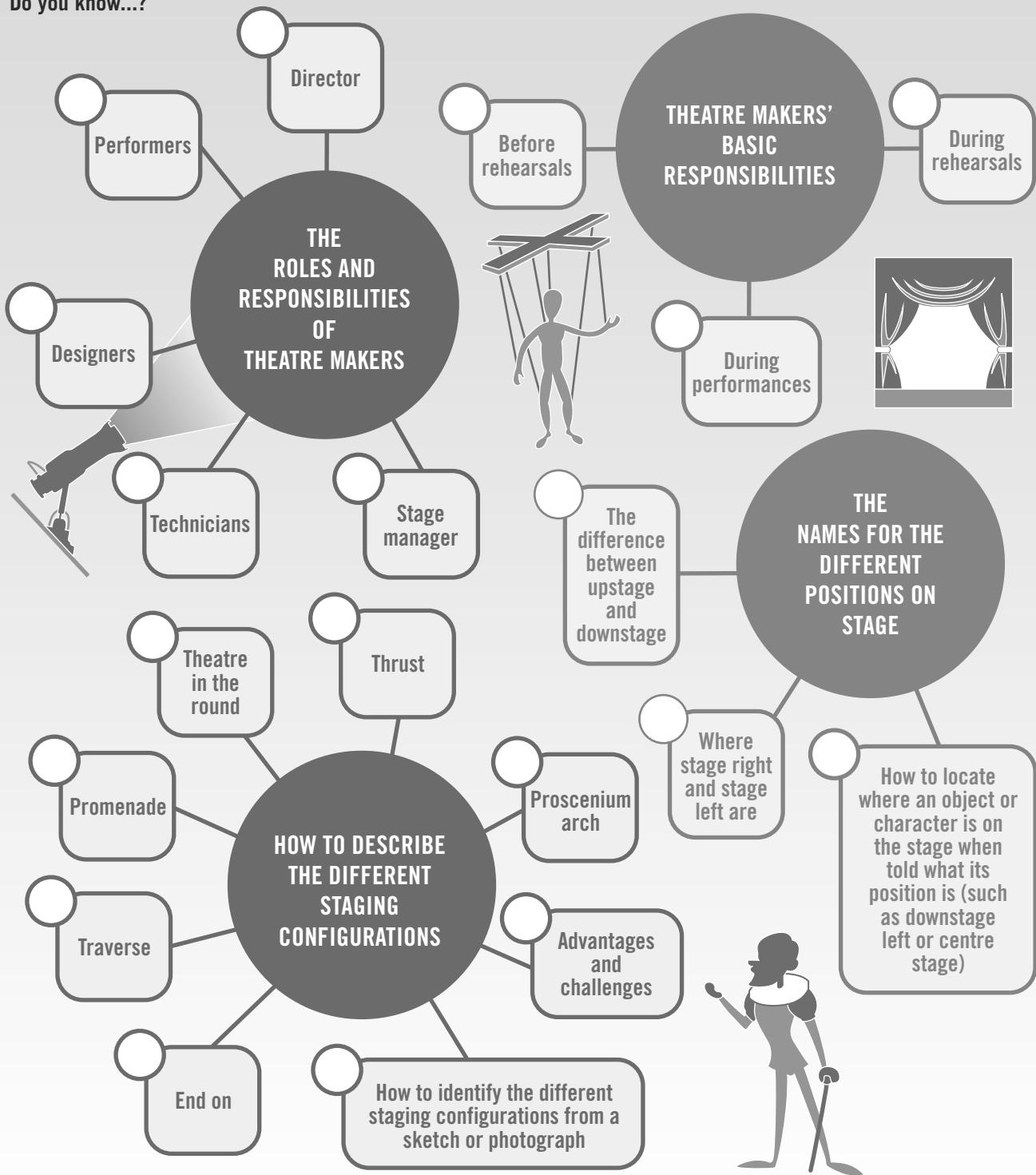
- 3 Copy a new version of the stage space and decide where you would position the characters at the beginning of Scene 13 in the Crofter's Cottage, when Margaret is showing Hannay the room. After you have marked where the characters and furniture are positioned, annotate the diagram by describing their stage positions. For example, if you have put Hannay downstage, you might write: *Hannay: downstage left (or DSL)*.

## LEARNING CHECKLIST: SECTION A

Tick each aspect of theatre roles and terminology if you are confident of your knowledge.

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

**Do you know...?**

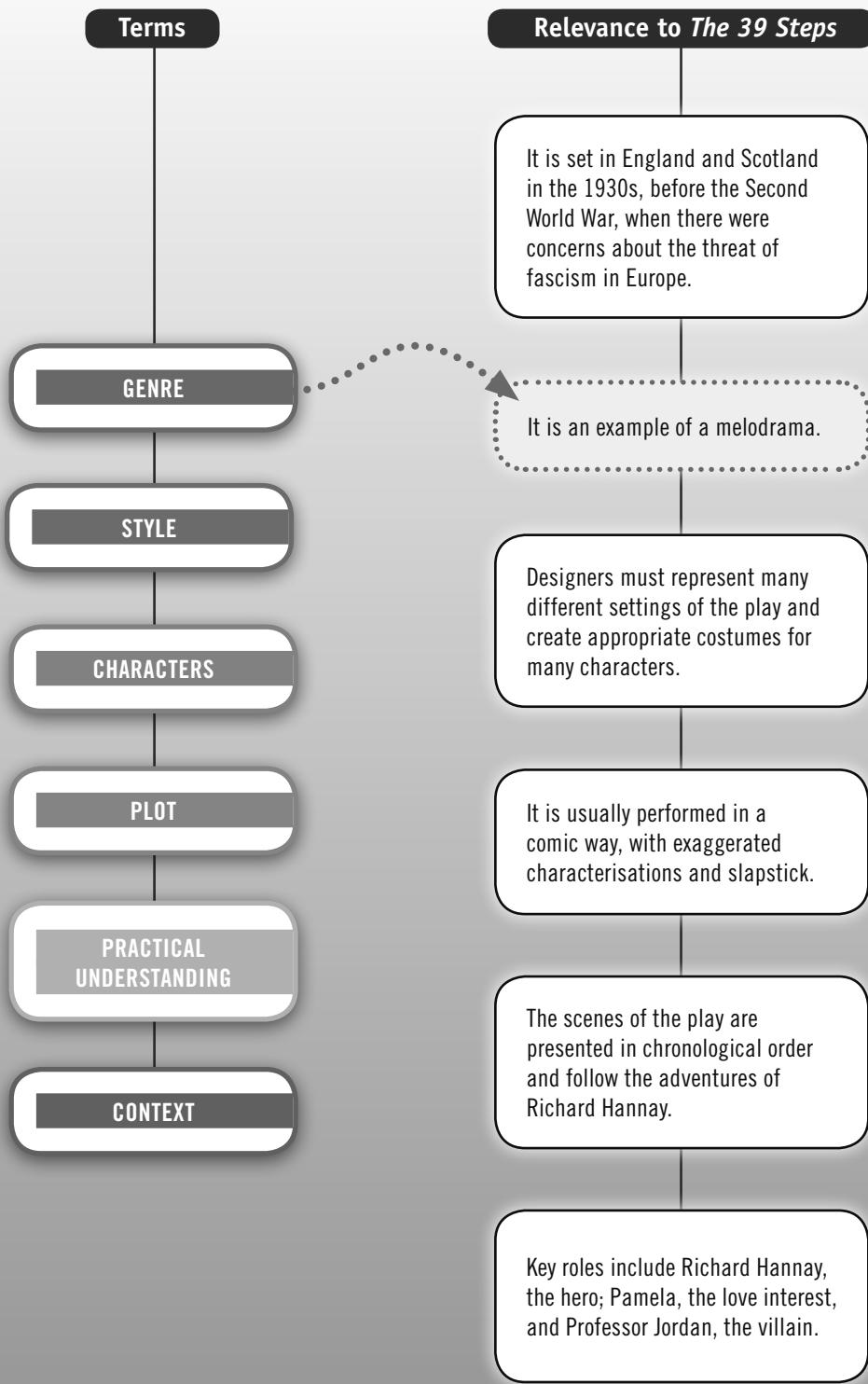


## The features of drama



### TEST YOURSELF B1

Match the theatrical term with its correct application to *The 39 Steps*.



## When did it happen?

### Task B2

Below are 12 key plot points from *The 39 Steps*. Put them in the order in which they occur in the play, numbering them 1 to 12.

Mr Memory asks Hannay if he had correctly remembered the details of the new engine.

Hannay tells the Milkman he's been seeing a married woman.

Pamela takes off her shoes and stockings.

Hannay tells the audience that, since arriving back in England, he has been bored.

On the train, Hannay tells Pamela that he is wanted for murder.

The McGarrigles discuss the terrible weather.

Mrs Jordan tells Hannay that they are throwing a birthday party for their daughter.

Hannay, at first, thinks that Margaret is the Crofter's daughter rather than his wife.

Annabella tells Hannay not to answer the telephone.

The Professor tells Hannay that he will lose the girl and 'die of grief'.

Hannay asks Professor Jordan about the Thirty-Nine Steps.

Mr McQuarrie introduces 'Captain Rob Roy McAlistair'.

## Who said that?



### TEST YOURSELF B2

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.

**1** We'll catch him, don't you worry sir!

**2** Cor blimey! I wouldn't be in your shoes! 'Ere have my cap and coat.

**3** Ye did nae tell me your name.

**4** Beautiful mysterious woman pursued by gunmen. Sounds like a spy story.

**5** Shall we pop into the party?

**6** He pushed in here and forced himself upon me.

**7** Is it true that all the ladies paint their toe-nails?

**8** Your English humour will not help Mr Hannay!

**9** Ye wouldn'a give away a dear young couple, would ye?

**10** Ay, his Sunday best. It's so black they'll never see you!

**11** You see I live here as a respectable citizen.

**12** Vote for a good world! A better world! A new world!

**13** You don't care about anything except your pompous, selfish, horrible, heartless self!

**14** I'm sorry. I feel such an awful fool for not having believed you.

**15** Thank you sir. I'm glad it's off my mind at last, sir.

**16** Quite ready for the questions, thankoo.

MILKMAN

MARGARET

**17** I'd get away from me as quick as you can if I was you.

PROFESSOR

HANNAY

MR MEMORY

ANNABELLA

MRS JORDAN

POLICEMAN

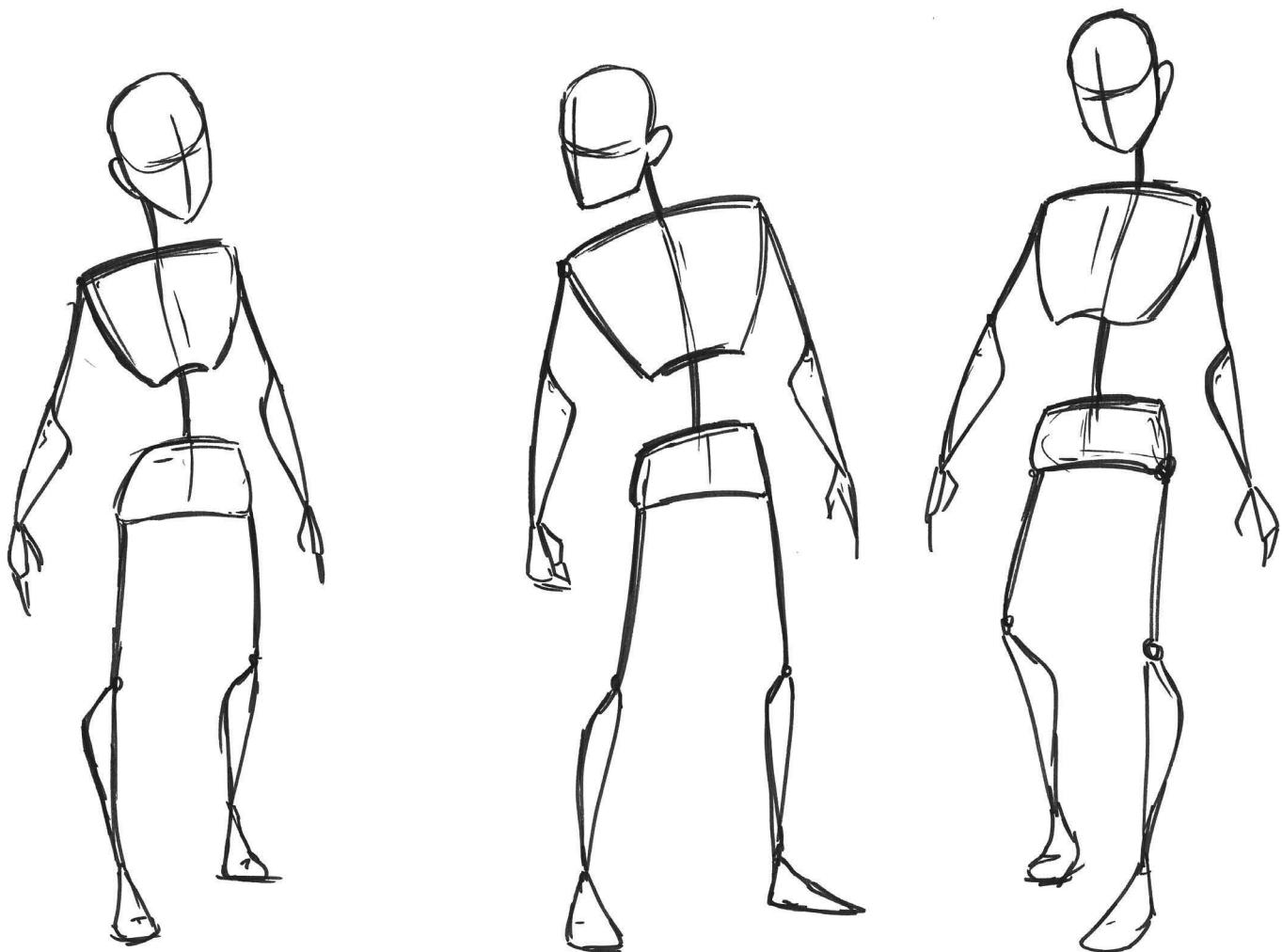
CROFTER

## Transforming costumes

### Task B9

Draw sketches of costume ideas for the following moments:

- Mr Memory in Scene 2, page 2
- Mrs Higgins in Scene 6, page 13
- Margaret in Scene 14, page 30.



## Set and prop ideas for key scenes

### Task B15

Use the chart below to note your ideas for some of the key locations, including how they will reflect the 1930s and how they could practically be achieved.

Location and basic requirements	Set and prop ideas
Hannay's flat: Armchair, lamp, table, bottle of Scotch, glass, telephone, window, blinds.	
Cockney Music Hall: Stage area, theatre box with at least two seats.	
Edinburgh train: Seats and window in the compartment; exterior.	
Crofter's cottage: Armchair, table, three chairs, window.	
Alt-na-Shellach: Door; Professor's study, including armchair.	

### Task B16

Locate at least one mention of each of these key props in the play and then write two sentences or draw a sketch to show how you think it should look.

- The telephone in Hannay's flat
- Salesman 2's samples case
- Professor Jordan's gun
- Mrs McGarrigle's tray of food.

## Sample answers for Component 1, Section B, Question 1

### Task B20

The following extracts are from responses focusing on Scene 21, the Assembly Hall. Read them through and annotate them for mentions of:

- Context, **C**
- Precise design detail, **D**
- Understanding of the play and characters, **U**.

#### Costume

In this scene, Hannay will retain some of his previous stylish appearance, but he will be disheveled and, at first, wear the Crofter's old overcoat. ① As appropriate for the 1930s, ② I will costume Hannay in high-waisted pleated trousers, a broad-shouldered suit jacket and matching waistcoat, in a conventional brown herringbone tweed. The Crofter's patched, black wool coat will hang loosely. ③ It is when Hannay takes off the rough coat that he is mistaken for the important guest speaker. He will straighten his tie andneaten his hair. As he is giving a political speech, I will have Dunwoody place a large, colourful party rosette on his jacket.

#### Lighting

I will fade up with a wash of bright golden light across the stage, produced by fresnel lanterns in the wings and fly space. When Dunwoody and McQuarrie are at the lectern, a profile spot with a subtle pink filter will be used to focus attention on them. This will create an old-fashioned theatrical effect to reinforce the period setting.

#### Set

To create a 1930s Assembly Hall, I will have a large cloth banner with 'Vote McCorquodale' drop down from the fly space, along with metres of brightly coloured bunting, strung stage right to stage left, creating an optimistic, old-fashioned atmosphere. A truck will be used to push on a small wooden stage centre stage with a 1930s microphone on a stand and a lectern. Dunwoody will bring on a stack of period oak folding chairs, placed at either side of the stage.

#### Sound

I want to capture the mood of ordinary people in Britain in the 1930s. To begin, I will play a recording of a marching band tune, perhaps including bagpipes. This will gradually fade during the opening lines of the scene. I will have a practical, 1930s-style stand microphone on stage to amplify the speakers' voices. Recorded applause will give the impression of an enthusiastic audience. However, to emphasise the artificiality and to create a comic effect, I will have the applause snap on and off.

#### Props and stage furnishings

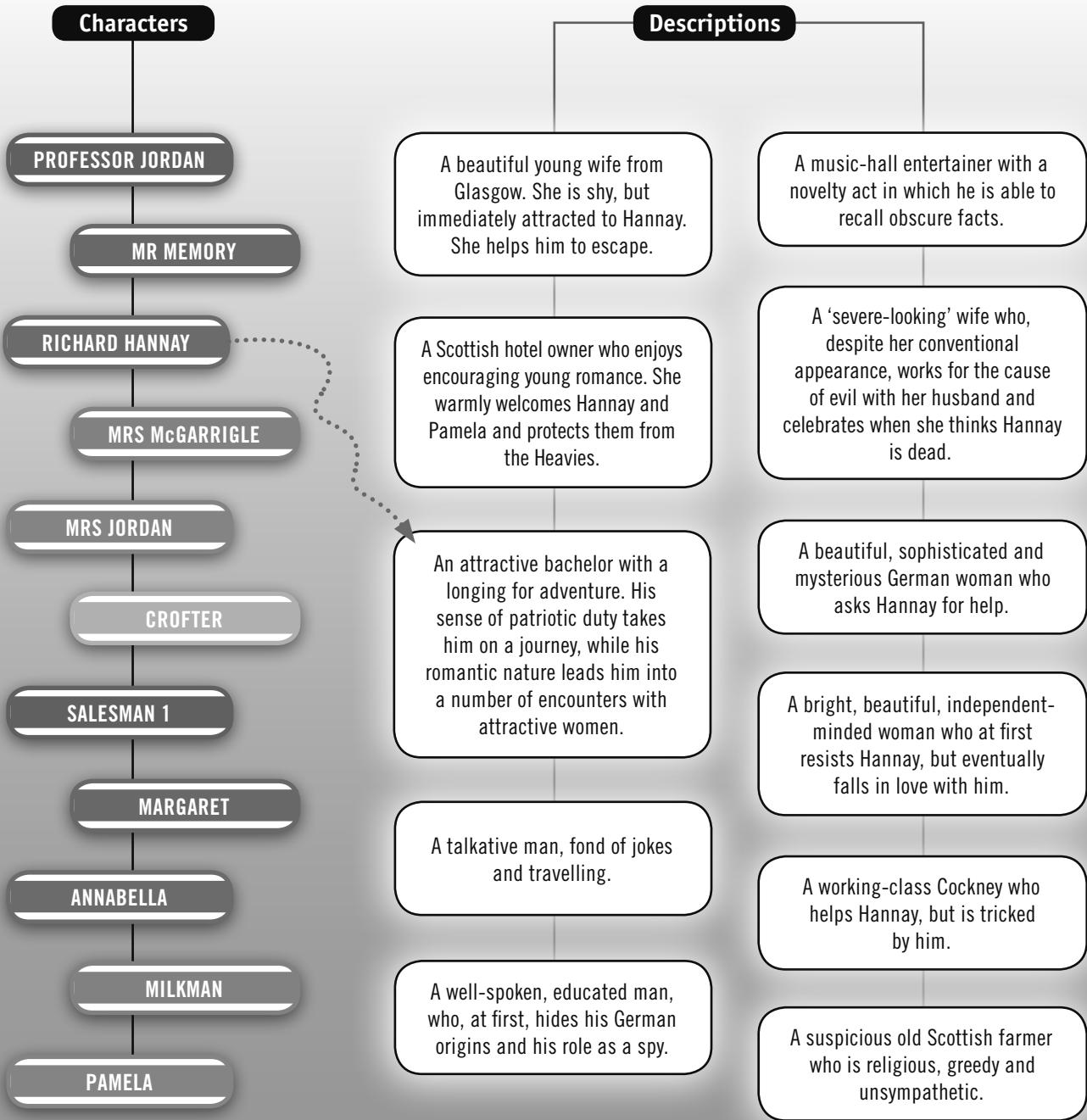
Although Art Deco furniture might be seen in fashionable areas, I believe that in this rural location, the Assembly Hall furniture would be more practical. When designing the lectern, I would aim for a sturdy and old-fashioned look, such as heavy oak, with a slanted top, on which speech notes could be put. I would have 'Assembly Hall' etched into the front of it in a traditional serif style. As I want to suggest it has been used for years, it will be distressed.

## Characterisation



### TEST YOURSELF B5

The following descriptions indicate some of the important features to be considered when developing characterisations. Match each one with the correct character from *The 39 Steps*.



## Characterisation focus on Richard Hannay

### Task B23

Use the chart below to note how the actor playing Hannay might use their vocal and physical skills to trace the changes in the character. Some suggestions have been provided, but add your own ideas and interpretation.

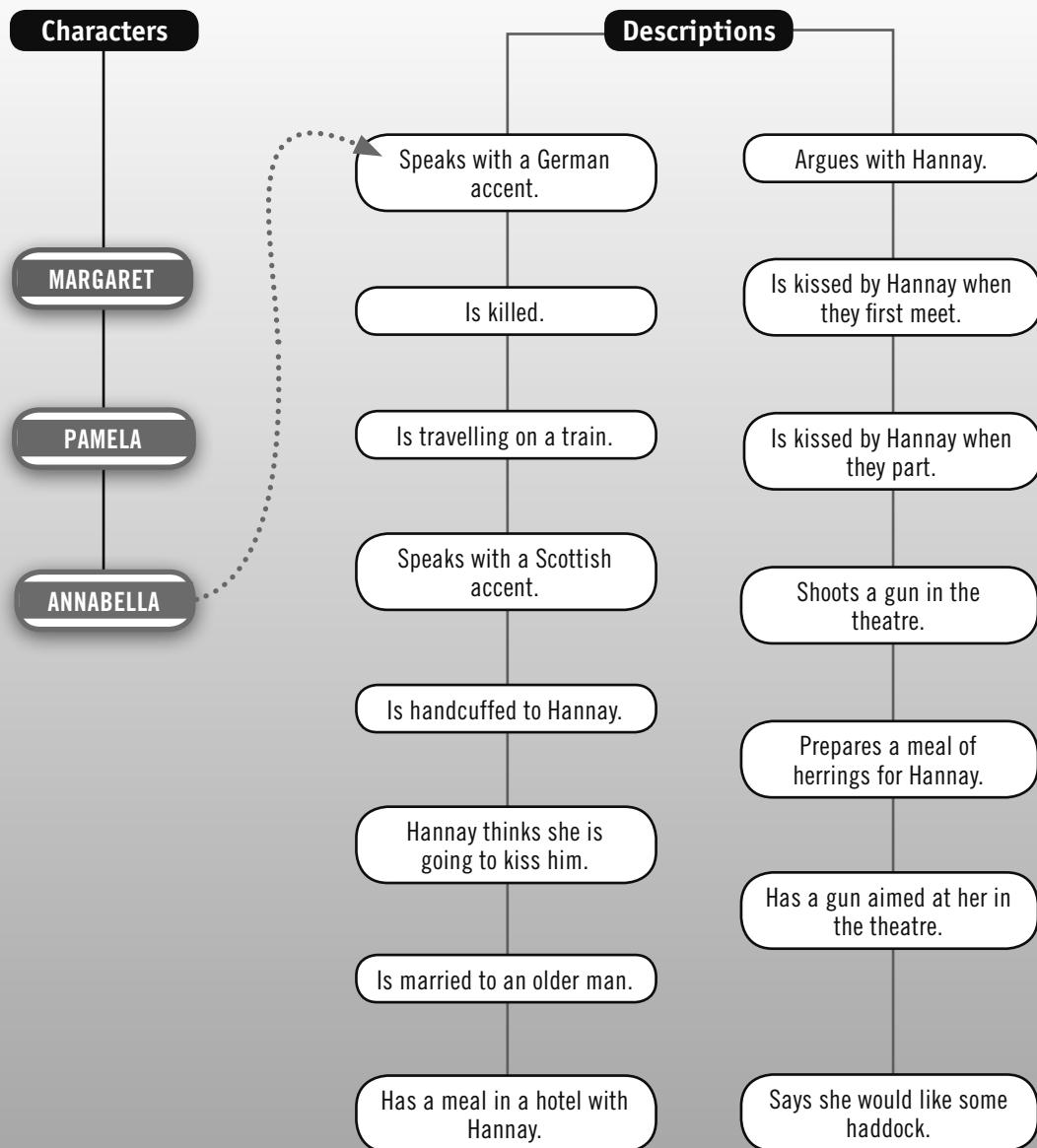
Scene	Key events involving Hannay	Acting techniques	Acting choices and effects
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hannay is introduced to the audience and reveals his frustrations with his life.</li> <li>He decides he must pull himself together and heads off to a West End show.</li> </ul>	Vocal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upper-middle-class English accent and clipped 1930s manner.</li> <li>Tone is casual and sophisticated early in the speech, but will grow more ragged and emotional, especially on ‘I could quite easily just –’, suggesting that he wishes he was dead.</li> <li>A complete change of tone when he decides to go to the theatre.</li> </ul>
		Physical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sits casually in an armchair with his legs crossed, making eye contact with the audience.</li> <li>Stands on ‘And I thought’ and begins pacing the room. He will grab the glass of Scotch and quickly gulp it down.</li> <li>When he has his ‘brainwave’, he will clap his hands.</li> </ul>
		Impact on audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The audience will understand through his direct address that they are meant to sympathise with him.</li> <li>They will anticipate that his restlessness will lead him into danger and adventure.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hannay has brought Annabella back to his flat.</li> <li>The phone rings and she tells him not to answer it.</li> <li>She tells him that she must go to Scotland.</li> <li>She goes into another room, leaving him ‘confused and mesmerised’.</li> </ul>	Vocal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hannay’s English accent will contrast with Annabella’s German one.</li> <li>He will be lightly teasing when he makes fun of her story, saying she should be ‘more careful’ and that it sounds like ‘a spy story’.</li> <li>As they are alone at night, he will be quieter than in the previous scene.</li> </ul>
		Physical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The close proximity between the characters will emphasise their attraction.</li> <li>Hannay will mainly move in an elegant, athletic way, though there are also opportunities for physical comedy, such as when he wrestles with the blind.</li> </ul>
		Impact on audience	The audience will sense the ‘electricity’, but it is understated.
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hannay tries to escape the police.</li> <li>He uses a kiss with Pamela to ‘hide’.</li> <li>He escapes outside the train.</li> </ul>	Vocal skills	
		Physical skills	
		Impact on audience	A resourceful action hero, able to think on his feet and take risks.
18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hannay meets Professor Jordan and realises he is a secret agent.</li> <li>He refuses the Professor’s offer to join him.</li> <li>He is shot by Professor Jordan.</li> </ul>	Vocal skills	
		Physical skills	
		Impact on audience	Hannay has patriotic beliefs that he will defend even if they lead to his death.
21	Hannay is mistaken for a guest speaker at a campaign rally and delivers a rousing patriotic speech.	Vocal skills	
		Physical skills	
		Impact on audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The audience sees how well Hannay can think on his feet, while also expressing what he values, such as people ‘doing the best they can’.</li> <li>His charisma and enthusiasm are delightful.</li> </ul>
33	Hannay and Pamela are happily married.	Vocal skills	
		Physical skills	
		Impact on audience	

## Female characters



### TEST YOURSELF B6

The descriptions below give aspects of the three female characters typically portrayed by one actor. Read each description and decide which of the characters it is appropriate for.



## Experimenting with vocal and physical skills

### Task B46

Read the description below of how a performer playing Hannay in Scene 3 might play the role. Mark each vocal skill with **V** and each physical skill with **P**. Alternatively, use different-coloured highlighters to show vocal and physical skills.

I want to convey that Hannay is curious about Annabella and attracted to her. He will tend to use humour and understatement to disguise his interest. After his more relaxed physical movement at the beginning of the scene, he will become tense when he looks out the window and turns around, dramatically making eye contact with Annabella.

When he repeats the word ‘involved’, he will emphasise it to show that it has two meanings – involved with her mystery and involved with her romantically. He will pause before exclaiming more loudly and urgently, ‘Tell me!’ He will shrug and say in a light, off-hand manner, ‘What’s that, a pub?’, showing his sense of humour. After the fast-paced dialogue, there will be a pause before he says, ‘Of course.’ He and Annabella will stare into each other’s eyes and he will step closer to her, indicating the attraction between them.

### Task B47

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

- Take a gun from someone      *Mrs Jordan, Scene 18*
- Run through the streets
- Hit someone
- Remove their glasses
- Blow smoke in someone’s face
- Stagger in pain, fear or shock
- Touch someone seductively
- Bring in a tray of sandwiches
- Tremble in fear
- Stare at someone in disbelief
- Handle a prop
- Have a physical fight with someone.

## Revealing characterisation through vocal effects on dialogue

### Task B48

Now you have tried out a range of vocal acting techniques, choose some that you could use on the lines in the table below to express the character and their situation.

Try to include two examples of vocal skills for each line. Think about:

**PHRASING**

**VOLUME**

**EMOTIONAL RANGE**

**PITCH**

**INTONATION**

**TIMING/PACE**

Line	Vocal skills	Details and explanation of what these choices will express to the audience
(Scene 2) Compère: And now with your kind attention I have the immense honour and privilege to presentin' to you one of the most remarkable men ever in the whole world.	Volume: Increasing.	I will speak loudly and grow louder as I build up to 'whole world' to impress the audience with the act I am introducing.
	Accent: Cockney.	I will have a Cockney accent, suitable for the Cockney Music Hall setting.
	Emphasis: Stressing key words.	I will emphasise words like 'immense', 'privilege' and 'remarkable' to create excitement for the audience as if they were sitting in a 1930s music hall.
(Scene 4) Annabella: There is a man in Scotland... only a matter of days.		
(Scene 9) Pamela: This is the man you want Inspector!		
(Scene 30) Professor: You thought you found love, Hannay?		

## Revealing characterisation through physical effects on dialogue

### Task B49

Choose at least two physical skills you could use on the lines in the table below to express the character and their situation. Think about, for example:

GESTURES

POSTURE

MOVEMENT

FACIAL EXPRESSION

Line	Physical skills	What these choices express to the audience
(Scene 18) Professor: Will you join us? Hannay?	Facial expression: wide-eyed, smiling, delighted.	The Professor believes he has convinced Hannay and will be smiling and enthusiastic.
	Gesture: hand extended.	He will approach Hannay with an outstretched hand as if to seal the deal.
	Movement: walking towards Hannay.	The audience will see how confident he is and how convinced he is of his powers of persuasion.
(Scene 5) Milkman: That's my money you just give me! Oi! Come back 'ere! Oi!		
(Scene 9) Salesman 2: We ride the railways and sell underwear!		
(Scene 14) Crofter: Ay! I mighta known! Making love behind my back!		

## Showing understanding of the play, characters and performance skills

### Task B59

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

Character	Scene: first key moment	Second key moment	Third key moment
<b>Hannay</b>	1: Speaking to the audience	14: With Margaret	Scene 30
Interpretation	A restless, upper-middle-class English bachelor who yearns for adventure.	Combines Hannay's romantic and adventurous characteristics.	Hannay fulfils his role as an action hero under difficult circumstances.
Physical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Movement: Begins the scene seated, but suddenly stands...</li> <li>Gestures: Waves palm outstretched...</li> <li>Prop use: Grabs a tumbler of Scotch and finishes it in one gulp.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proximity: He and Margaret stand close to each other and make eye contact.</li> <li>Touch: Margaret helps him change into her husband's coat...</li> <li>Pace: Moves quickly, looking for the best means of escape.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Movement: Runs on stage...</li> <li>Gesture: Points at Mr Memory, commanding him to speak.</li> <li>Expressions: Excited and wild-eyed at first...</li> <li>Posture: Assumes a dramatic action pose on 'Oh no you don't Professor.'</li> </ul>
Vocal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accent: Clipped 1930s English.</li> <li>Pause: After each rhetorical question.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volume They will both speak softly and quickly...</li> <li>Tone: Playful, then tender.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volume: Shouting at first...</li> <li>Emotional range: Desperate at first, then confident once he has been proven right by Mr Memory.</li> </ul>
<b>The Crofter</b>	12: Invites Hannay to stay	13: Demands supper	14: Suspicious of Hannay, then learns the police are there
Interpretation			
Physical skills			
Vocal skills			
<b>Annabella</b>	2: Shoots a gun in the air at the theatre	3: Explains her dilemma to Hannay	4: With Hannay before she dies
Interpretation			
Physical skills			
Vocal skills			
<b>Pamela</b>	9: With Hannay and Policemen on train	25: On Moors with Hannay	27: In hotel with Hannay
Interpretation			
Physical skills			
Vocal skills			
<b>Professor Jordan</b>	18: Pretends to be sympathetic to Hannay	18: Reveals his real persona to Hannay	30: Shoots Mr Memory and threatens Pamela
Interpretation			
Physical skills			
Vocal skills			
<b>Margaret</b>	13: Interacts shyly with Hannay	13: Serves meal to Crofter and Hannay	14: Wakes Hannay and helps him to escape
Interpretation			
Physical skills			
Vocal skills			

## Design ideas for an extract and the whole play

### Task B63

Read Scene 10, pages 24–25. Then complete the following grid with design ideas for each of the specialisms.

	Design ideas and challenges of extract	Examples	Details in extract	Rest of play (pick key moments to discuss in detail)
<b>Costume</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costume for Hannay.</li> <li>• Uniforms for the Policemen.</li> </ul>	Fabrics: Colours: Fit/condition: Footwear/ accessories:		
<b>Set</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forth Bridge.</li> <li>• Outdoor night-time setting.</li> </ul>	Staging configuration: Colours: Materials: Levels: Props:		
<b>Lighting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Night-time, foggy.</li> <li>• Blackout.</li> </ul>	Colours: Angles/intensity: Special effects: Transitions:		
<b>Sound</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wind.</li> <li>• Creaking girders.</li> <li>• Hannay's descent and splash.</li> <li>• Morse Code.</li> <li>• Radio announcer's voice.</li> </ul>	Volume: Live or recorded: On stage or off: Transitions:		
<b>Puppetry</b>	Large model of Forth Bridge to contrast with small marionette of Hannay.	Materials: Size: Fabrics: How it will be operated:		

## Sample answers for Component 1, Section B, Question 5

Focus on Scene 18, pages 41–42, from 'The Professor staggers back clutching his heart' to the end of the scene.

Describe how you would use your design skills to create effects that support the mood and actions of this extract, and explain why your ideas are appropriate both for this extract and the play as a whole.

[20 marks]

### Task B68

The following extracts are from student-style responses to the question above. Read them and put:

- C next to creative ideas
- U next to any points which show understanding
- T next to any examples of correct terminology.

1 At this point, the act is approaching its climax and, as a lighting designer, I will want to increase the excitement and tension. In the Professor's study I will have two practical lamps – a floor lamp and a desk lamp – both with green shades. The floor lamp can be directed onto Hannay's face as if he is facing an interrogation. I will have the corners of the study underlit, to create a sense of mystery.

When Hannay is shot, a single strobe flash will emphasise the power of the gunshot. When the door flies open, a bright column of light from fresnel lanterns in the wings will spill onto the stage. I will use a gobo to create a swirling effect, as if the wild party is just offstage. This will create excitement and a sense of danger.

As the Jordans dance, I will backlight them with a bright red filter to exaggerate their silhouettes.

2 Sound design has an important role to play in creating the intensity and sense of danger in this scene. My concept of the play is more stylised than realistic and I want to heighten the lack of reality through music and exaggerated sound effects.

For the gunshot, I will use an unnaturally loud recorded sound with reverb, so that Hannay's reaction can almost be in slow motion. As Hannay lays on the ground, a recording of a patriotic German song will begin to play softly, as if to show that the German agent has won. When Mrs Jordan enters, however, this will be drowned out by a burst of recorded jitterbug, such as Benny Goodman's 'Sing, Sing, Sing'. It begins with a drum solo, which could create a sense of mystery as Mrs Jordan enters, but then has a full swing orchestra that suits the Jordans' dancing. I would increase the volume of the music until the end of the scene, when it will snap off.

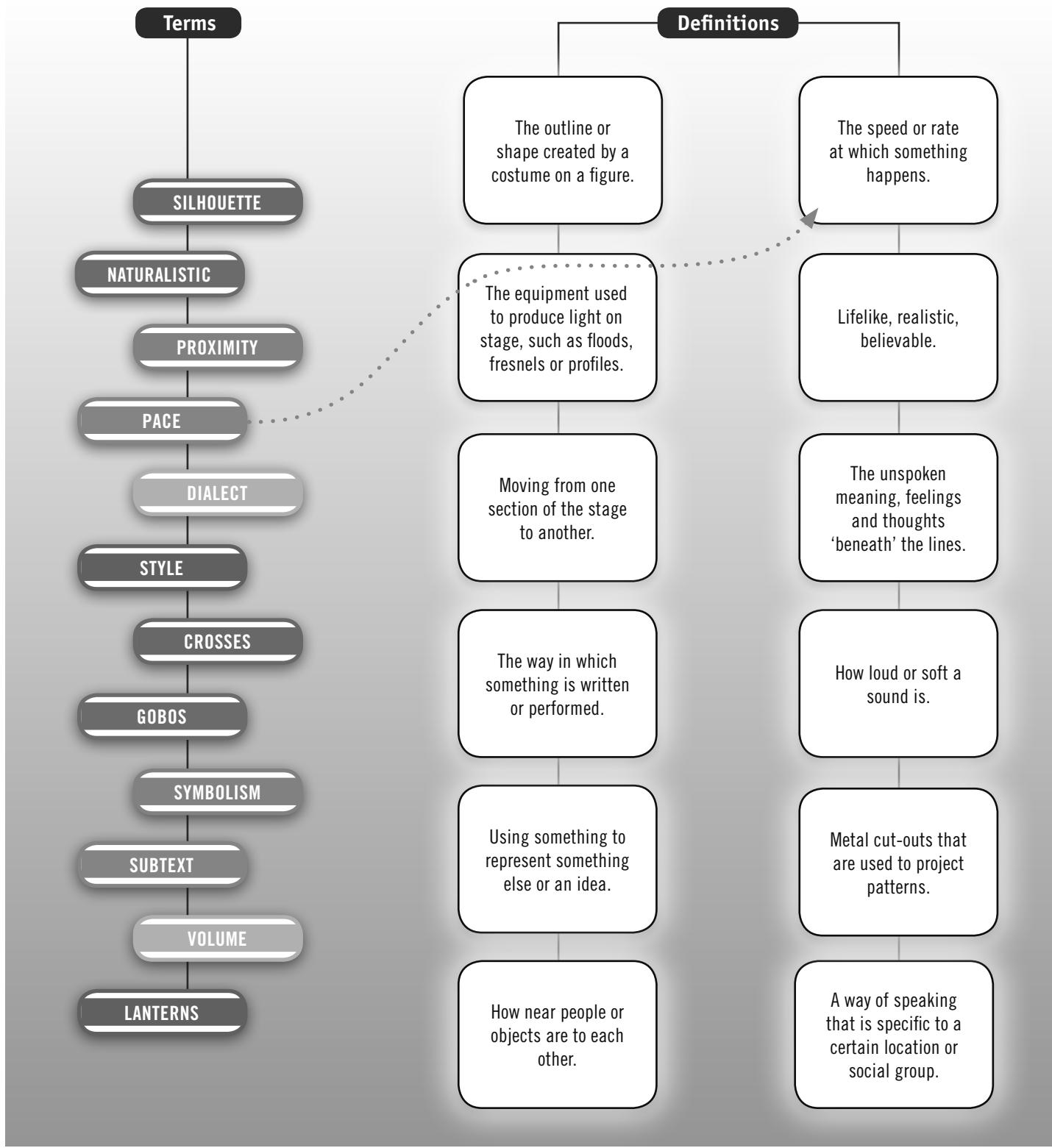
My aim is to create an exciting, eerie and absurd ending to the first act.

## Performance and design



### TEST YOURSELF B8

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

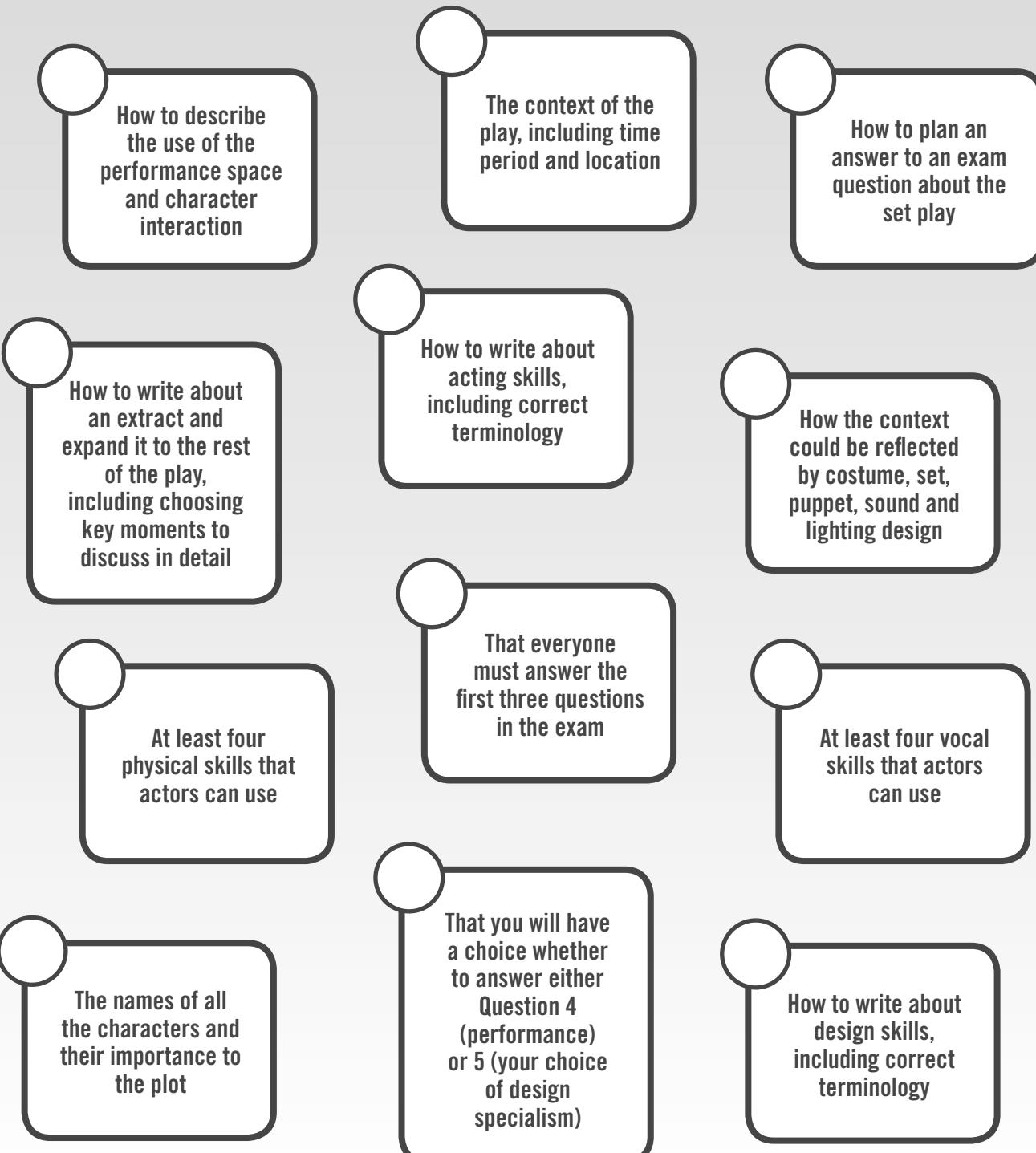


## LEARNING CHECKLIST: SECTION B

Tick each aspect of your understanding of *The 39 Steps* if you are confident of your knowledge.

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

### Do you know...?



## Discussing vocal and physical skills

### Task C6

Read the following response to a performance and annotate it with the vocal skills being discussed.

As the music producer, the actor sounded a bit like the Rolling Stones singer Mick Jagger: he drawled certain words and used nasal elongated vowel sounds. This use of a slightly old-fashioned cockney-type accent associated him with famous rock stars of the 1960s. He had excellent comic timing, saying some words very quickly, so that the audience couldn't help but be caught by surprise and laugh at some of his more outrageous lines. He would throw away lines like, 'a genius like me', showing how big his ego was. One scene that particularly showed the actor's skills was when he alternated between talking into his mobile and barking instructions at the singer. His use of two different tones was very noticeable, one which was softly intimate changing to one which was commanding and a bit frightening, especially when he said in a cold, matter-of-fact way, 'You're nothing without me.' The emphasis on the word 'nothing' was hard and cruel. This showed how the character was used to controlling people and being obeyed.

### Task C9

Read the performance response given below. Annotate it to show which physical acting skills are being discussed.

In the ghost scene, the actor portrayed both Hamlet and the ghost of his father. This involved very sophisticated use of physical skills. When playing the ghost, he would put on a large overcoat and change his posture, becoming very upright and rigid, seeming to grow before our eyes. He would use slow, powerful gestures, such as pointing where Hamlet had previously stood. He also made piercing eye contact with some members of the audience, suggesting his pain and the urgency of his demands. When becoming Hamlet again, the actor would throw off the coat and appear to shrink, his posture becoming hunched and his gestures tentative and fluttering. The transformation was accomplished very quickly, so that the audience was amazed by this virtuoso display of physical skills. At the end of the sequence, Hamlet collapsed to the floor as if exhausted.

## 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

Style

Context

Hair

Accessories

Condition and fit



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

## 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 Summer and Smoke, designed by Tom Scutt, was not the naturalistic type of set many associate with the work of playwright Tennessee Williams. Instead, the design was minimalist (D) 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 Sunset Boulevard 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 pinspot 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 The Caucasian Chalk Circle by Bertolt Brecht, the sound designer used sound to contribute to the epic style of the play. D Brecht believed that the audience should not think they are watching real-life and used the alienation 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. A 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 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.

## Theatre production



### TEST YOURSELF C2

Read these responses to different productions and identify whether they are about **performance, sound, lighting, costume or set**. Do 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 slyly, enjoying the impression he had made on both the other characters and the audience.

5 The actors' German accents were truly impressive.

9 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.

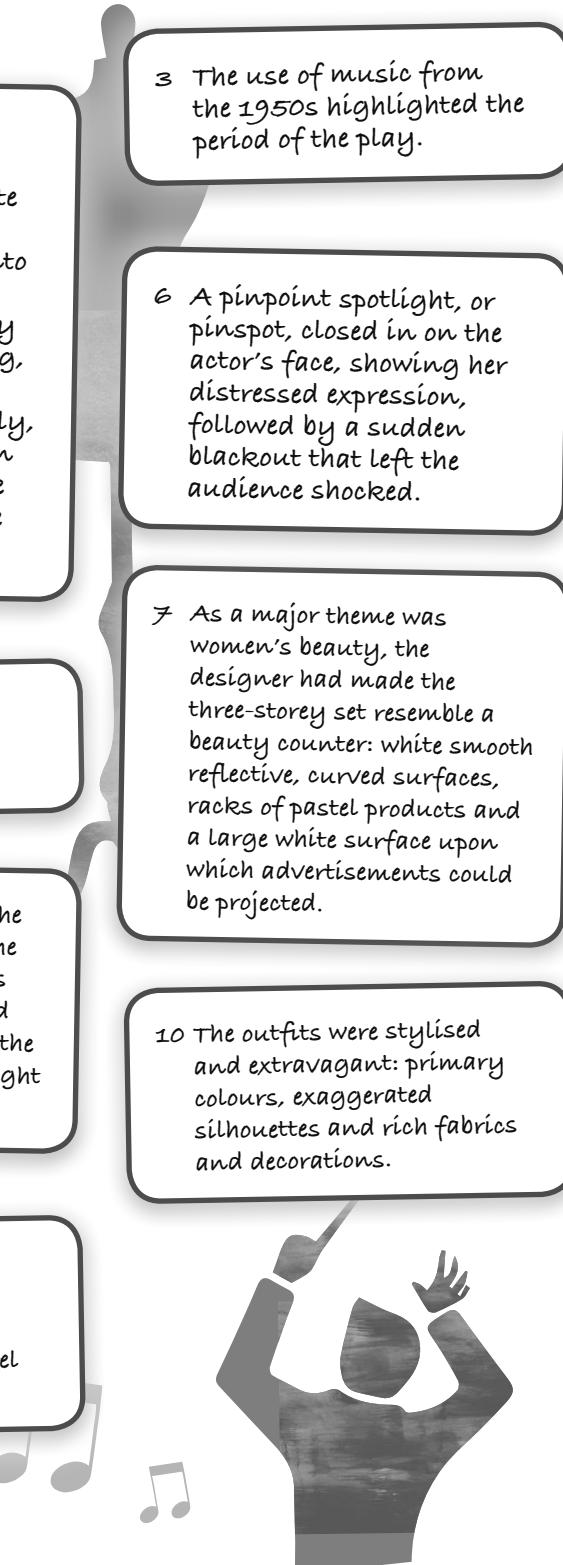
12 A speaker at the back of the auditorium was used to project the sound of a car driving along a gravel drive.

3 The use of music from the 1950s highlighted the period of the play.

6 A pinpoint spotlight, or pinspot, closed in on the actor's face, showing her distressed expression, followed by a sudden blackout that left the audience shocked.

7 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.



## Technical vocabulary



### TEST YOURSELF C3

Match the correct definition with the technical production term.

TERMS				
		Pinspot	Prosthetics	
Theme or motif	Acoustics	Fade	House lights	Black hole
Truck	Set dressings	Colour palette	Corsetry	
Reverb	Cross-fade	Wash	Trapdoor	Drapes
Composer	Cyclorama	Fly system	Trim	
DEFINITIONS				
1 A spotlight so tightly focused that it lights only a very small area, such as a single object or an actor's face.	2 Curtains or other hanging fabric.	3 A distinctive recurring section of music, often associated with a particular character or mood.	4 The range of colours used.	
5 Additional pieces of make-up that can be attached, such as false noses, artificial wounds or horns.	6 A large semi-circular stretched curtain or screen, usually positioned upstage.	7 The sound quality in a given space, such as whether or not a theatrical space affects sound making it clear, echoing, warm or muffled and so on.	8 A means of raising and lowering scenery or other items onto the stage using a system of ropes and pulleys.	
9 The lights in the auditorium that are usually up when the audience arrives and before the play begins.	10 Undergarments such as corsets, girdles and bustles used to shape a body and alter its silhouette.	11 Someone who writes music.	12 A lighting transition involving changing lighting states by bringing up the new state while reducing the old state.	
13 A platform on wheels upon which scenery can be mounted and moved.	14 An area of the stage which has accidentally been left unlit.	15 Items on the set not actually used as props, but that create detail and interest, such as vases or framed paintings.	16 Additional decorative items such as fur on a collar or cuffs or a fringe on a jacket, dress or skirt.	
17 An echoing effect, sustaining the sound longer than usual.	18 Gradually turning sound or lighting up or down.	19 Lighting that covers the entire stage.	20 A door in the floor of a stage allowing objects or performers to be dropped, lifted or lowered.	

## 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

The genre, style and period of the play you have seen and how they might affect the acting and design choices

How to make detailed notes about the production you have seen

How to select key moments or sections to write about

The technical terminology appropriate for different specialisms

How to describe, analyse and evaluate

Which characters you might choose to discuss if writing about performance

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

How to evaluate if the acting or designs are effective

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

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...?**

