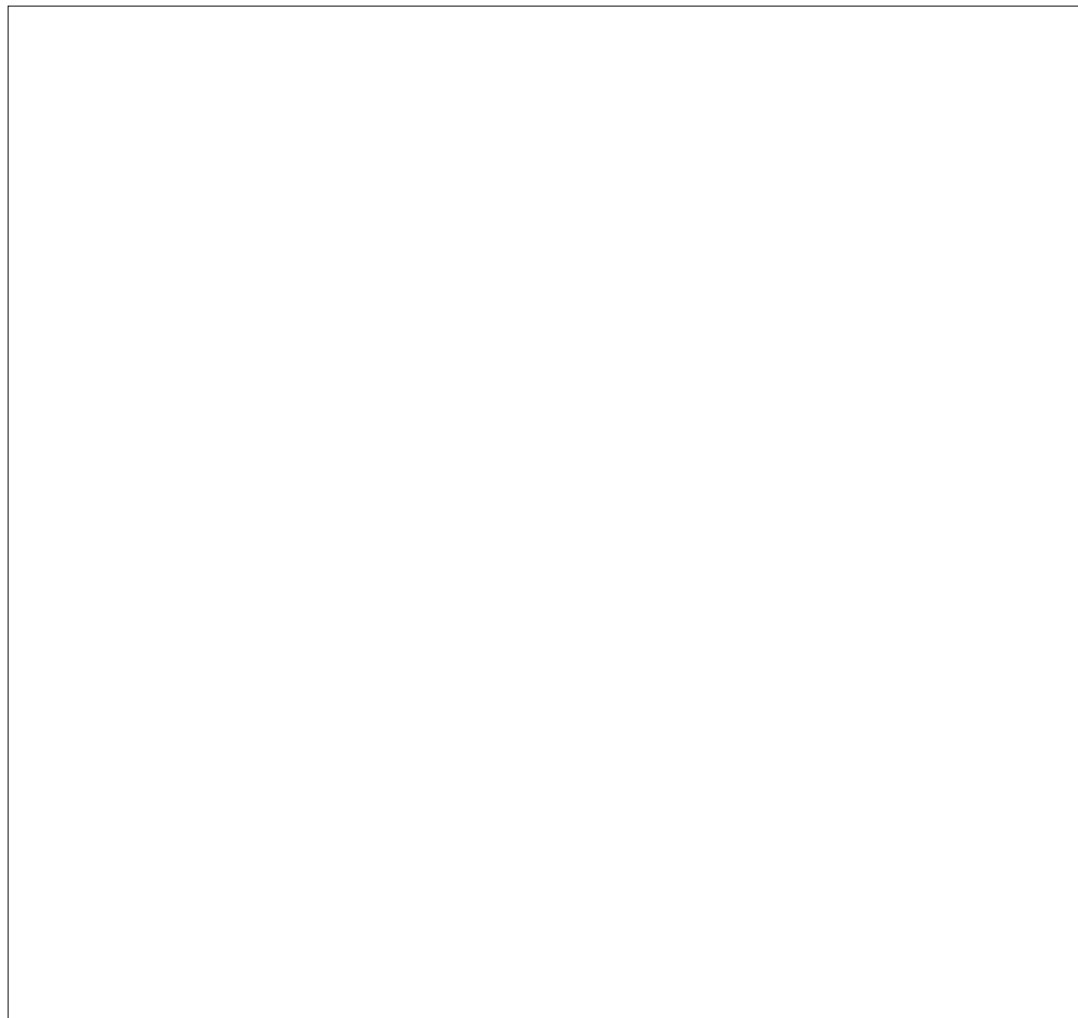


Analysing costume design, including hair and make-up

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 minimalistic (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' 'choreography' 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			
Theme or motif	Acoustics	Pinpoint	Prosthetics
Truck	Set dressings	Fade	House lights
Reverb	Cross-fade	Wash	Trapdoor
Composer	Cyclorama	Fly system	Trim
			Black hole
			Corsetry
			Drapes

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

How to describe, analyse and evaluate

The technical terminology appropriate for different specialisms

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

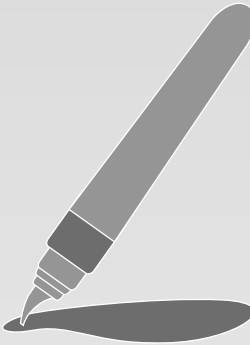
How to describe the impact of the acting or design choices on the audience

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...?



How to look for
key words in the
questions

The difference
between your
Section B and
Section C texts

How to avoid
running out
of time

How to include
detail and refer
to specific
examples

How to plan
an answer



How to use
discursive markers

How to include
technical
terminology

The range of
questions you
could be asked