

FACTFILE:

GCSE DRAMA

Component 3



Definitions required for Understanding Theatre

Definitions for 1a

Social Context

The social context is linked to the period or time in which a play is written and generally defines the characters as being of working, middle or upper class. External influences which impact on the play are also part of the social context and can include factors such as war, social unrest or the living conditions of the time.

Cultural Context

Cultural context is about how the values and attitudes of the period can affect the behaviour of the characters in the play. The ethnic origins of the characters can also have an impact on how they speak and behave and the development of the plot. Cultural context can range from a play having royal patronage to the influences of comprehensive education.

Historical Context

The historical context is the background to the period of time in which the play is set and refers to what is happening in terms of the political climate which may affect the characters and the plot as well as the influence of actual historical events.

Theatrical conventions

Theatrical conditions refer to what is defined by the playwright in terms of the type of staging designed for the play. They refer to the original conditions when the play was first produced and presented for an audience in an actual theatre or in a specific staging style.

Form and style

Form refers to the format in which the text is presented such as general dialogue, monologue, duologue, soliloquy and ensemble. It also refers to the number of actors for which the play was originally written. Style can be defined as the manner in which the play is performed and communicated to an audience and can include ideas such as formal or informal, exaggeration, physicalisation, use of stillness or high energy.

Genre

Genre refers to the category or type of theatre which is being presented. A play cannot always be defined as one specific genre but is generally based on comedy and/or tragedy and developed under those two broad headings. 'Naturalism' developed as an authentic and natural setting and acting genre and was a direct reaction to Victorian melodrama while 'realism' refers to a 'slice of life' and realistic acting and may require limited or no set. This is now described as a 'non-naturalistic' genre.

Language

Language refers directly to the words used as the text for the play. Plays are often written in a specific dialect to reflect the locality and status of the characters. The playwright often writes the words phonetically to capture the authenticity of the character's speech and often include colloquial language to enrich the personality of the character. Shakespearian language will also include blank verse.

Structure

Structure refers directly to the length and running time of the play. It includes the specific divisions and shape of the play including the number of scenes, acts, episodes and should refer to the appropriate opportunities of an interval, opening and the use of the 'curtain'.

Reviewing Theatre Fact File – Lighting, Multimedia, Sound**Definitions: 1(b)****Lighting:**

Stage lighting is the craft of lighting as it applies to the production of theatre. Several types of lighting can be used to achieve different effects but for the purposes of GCSE Drama, pupils should know that there are 3 main lamp types – floods (for general lighting), profiles (for hard-edged effect) and fresnels (for soft-edge effect) and more commonly now, the use of LEDs. They should also be able to refer to colour and the use of gels, intensity and the effects achieved by using gobos and follow spots and the effects on lighting when using fog/dry ice machines.

Multimedia:

Multimedia is the use of more than one type of medium; from image, sound, text and/or video to communicate intended meaning and create impact for the audience. These mediums can be active, reactive or interactive and include the use of digital technologies such as computers, tablets, phones or other digital equipment. Students should refer to at least two mediums and make reference to the appropriate digital technology.

Sound:

Stage sound is usually regarded as incidental music which is artificially created using sound processes to create effect, mood or atmosphere or emphasise artistic content on stage. It can be used at the beginning, end or during scenes. Sound effects are also often created artificially to enhance dramatic effect and can be generated from online sources, bought from specialist companies or created live on or offstage. Students may wish to create and use their own sound effects.

Definitions for Costume – Question 2(a) and (b)

2a – Costumes for stage – clothes used by performers on stage. They may have been designed and specifically made for the character or collected and arranged specifically for the character. They should reflect the character's age, gender role, profession, social class, personality and be historically or period/era accurate. As the question refers to a specific time in the play, the costume should also reflect geographic location, season and time of day.

A sketch should be an A4 page size and be a simple representation of a body shape. A minimum outline is required and the annotation is essential. Students must avoid justification in this section of the answer and notes should include references to period, social status, colour, shape, materials, make-up and accessories.

Period – a costume should reflect the time and location when the play was set and first performed. Students may wish to change the period in which a play is set but if they decide to change the period of the play, then this change needs to be clearly justified.

Social status

- (1) lower/working class; regarded as characters from manual worker families, e.g. Juno from Juno and the Paycock, Proctor from The Crucible, SB from Philadelphia, Here I Come, Mickey from Blood Brothers or Carol from Sparkleshark.
- (2) Middle-class; regarded as white-collar worker families, e.g. Middle Class; Judge Hathorne from The Crucible or Mrs Lyons from Blood Brothers.
- (3) Upper Class – regarded as titled family members, e.g. Duke Thesus for A Mid-summer Night's Dream.

Colour, Shape, Materials

Colour refers to the full range of colours and shades of colour which may be used for costumes.

Shape refers to length of skirts, sleeves, coats, jackets etc. Shape refers to the structure of the costume such as tight waist, broad shoulders, low neckline etc.

Materials refers to actual cloth or fabric such as brocade, velvet, linen, cotton, nylon, polyester, silk, satin, lace, embroidered etc.

Make-up and accessories refers to facial colour and simple jewellery essential to the character such as wedding ring, watch or specific jewellery. Simple hand-held accessories may be included to support location, e.g. handbag, handkerchief, toy etc.

Question 2(b) Justification

Students are expected to justify all the ideas which they have referred to in question 2 (a). They need to provide reasons why they have chosen all aspects of the costume. The period, social status, colour, shape, materials, make-up and accessories of the costume will need a specific date for the fashion of the era being presented and should be linked to social status, location, season and time of day with reference to the chosen time in the question.

The quotation must be chosen from the specific time outlined in the question and should connect directly to the costume for the character through appropriate comment.

Question 3(a) - Definitions for Stage Plan – (Refer to glossary)

A stage plan is a bird's-eye view of the stage shape and should include:

- exits/entrances;
- position of the audience;
- basic set required for short extract;
- depending on the stage chosen, it may also include a cyclorama.

(stage right and left are always shown from the actor's perspective standing on stage and facing the audience)

Candidates may also include a key to show positions of characters and set.

Question 3 (b) - Director's advice – Mood and Context

The student is asked to take on the role of director in this question.

A director is the person responsible for overseeing the mounting of a play and unifying all aspects of the production. A director interprets the playwright's text for the actors, breaking down the script by analysing and explaining the meaning of the content. The director should give detailed notes to the cast during rehearsals.

A director's role is to:

- Decide upon the interpretation of the text and analyse the script to discover the play's structure and meaning;
- Understand each character in terms of both script and the demands that character has on the actor;
- Be able to envisage the play's mood and know how to actualise in terms of design and theatrical space;
- Be able to see the play in terms of both physical and verbal action.

Question 3 (c) - use of voice, movement and facial expression.

This is a performance question and the student is asked to take on the role of an actor.

Use of facial expression, voice or movement as an actor – Question 3 (c)

Voice:

An actor needs to interpret the script vocally through the use of:

- Emphasis – changing the tone on a specific syllable, word or phrase;
- Inflexion – the upward and downward glide of the voice;
- Pace – slow, medium and fast;
- Pause – timing the space between words;
- Volume – louder and softer.

Movement:

An actor needs to interpret a script through the use of movement and gesture:

- Using exits and entrances;
- Gait – speed and timing of walking;
- Gestures – hand, arm and head movements;
- Using stage furniture and properties;
- Choreographed movements and stage combat.

Facial Expression:

An actor needs to interpret a script through the use of his/her face:

- Use of eyes – squinting, widening etc.;
- Use of brow – raising and lowering, wrinkling forehead;
- Use of eyebrows – raising and lowering, frowning and surprise;
- Use of mouth – shaping for changes of expression;
- Whole face reactions – reflecting mood.

