

FACTFILE: GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE



Unit 2 THE STUDY OF DRAMA AND POETRY



Section A: Drama

Unit

Unit 2 – The Study of Drama and Poetry

Option (if applicable)

Section A: Drama

Students have a choice in Section A where they choose from one of the six plays on offer and they answer one question from a choice of two on each play.

Purpose of FactFile?

The purpose of this FactFile is to provide details of the format of this section of the Unit in terms of its structure and assessment. Each of the named texts in Section A is explored and information is provided for use when teaching the text. Some sample questions are provided. The FactFile also provides a list of suggested websites and further resources.

This FactFile is intended as a starting point for further study, and suggests ways in which students can begin to build critical understanding of the play.

Specific Learning Outcomes supported by the FactFile?

This FactFile supports the Learning Outcomes in the aims of the specification:

- read and understand a play;
- respond to the play critically and imaginatively;
- select and evaluate relevant textual material;
- use details from the play to illustrate interpretations; and
- explain and evaluate how the dramatist uses dramatic techniques, language, structure and form to present ideas, themes, characters and settings.

Target audience? Student? Teacher? Both?

The main target audience for this FactFile is teachers although some sections could be used by students.

How the FactFile supports development of Key Stage 4 Statutory skills?

The FactFile supports the further development of a range of skills from the Key Stage 3 statutory requirements for:

- Language and Literacy: English with Media Education and
- The Arts: Drama at Key Stage 3

During their work in this Unit students have opportunities to listen to and take part in discussions, explanations, role-plays and presentations; contribute comments, ask questions and respond to others' points of view; and communicate information. They can develop their understanding of and explore ideas, events and features in texts; and use evidence from texts to explain opinions; communicate information, meaning, feelings, imaginings and ideas in a clear and organised way; and write with increasing accuracy and proficiency.

FactFile Content

1. Overview
2. Starting Points
3. Assessment of Unit 2 Section A
4. Additional Resources

Additional information sources

Section 4 suggests some additional resources for classroom use.

1. Overview

Students should study **ONE** of the following texts:

- **Sean O’Casey** – *Juno and the Paycock*
or
- **J.B. Priestley** – *An Inspector Calls*
or
- **Brian Friel** – *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*
or
- **Willy Russell** – *Blood Brothers*
or
- **R C Sherriff** – *Journey’s End*
or
- **Simon Stephens** – *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

Within each text students should be able to:

- read and understand a play;
- respond to the play critically and imaginatively;
- select and evaluate relevant textual material;
- use details from the play to illustrate interpretations; and
- explain and evaluate how the dramatist uses dramatic techniques, language, structure and form to present ideas, themes, characters and settings.

Assessment Objectives/Quality of Written Communication

In this unit (Drama and Poetry) all **four Assessment Objectives** are being assessed.

However, AO1 – respond to texts critically and imaginatively; select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretation – and, especially, AO2 – explain how language structure and form contribute to writers’ presentation of ideas, themes, characters and settings – are the main focus of the Drama Section.

In GCSE English Literature, candidates must demonstrate their quality of written communication. They need to:

- ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear;
- select and use a form and style of writing that suit their purpose and complex subject matter; and
- organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

Quality of written communication is assessed in responses to questions and tasks that require extended writing. QWC is assessed in this unit.

Some general tips based on the Assessment Objectives:

- in addressing AO1 candidates should be able to produce informed and relevant responses that communicate their knowledge and understanding of their selected text. They need to demonstrate their ability to express relevant ideas accurately and coherently, using appropriate terminology and concepts.
- AO1 can be satisfied by the candidate developing his/her own interpretation in response to the text.
- in addressing AO2, the candidates should be able to analyse the dramatist’s use of methods such as language, structure and form. They need to be able to identify the dramatic methods employed and show how these relate to the key terms of the question they are answering.

- this is an open book (unannotated, clean copy of the text) examination and, as such, examiners will have higher expectations of the use of relevant detail to illustrate and support interpretations as well as succinct and appropriate use of quotation.

2: STARTING POINTS

The following information is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but is intended as a starting point for teachers and students. It reflects some of the relevant textual detail and dramatic methods which may be explored and developed further in the classroom.

Sean O'Casey – *Juno and the Paycock*

A01

A few points on textual detail:

- An understanding of the plot, the playwright and the context of the play, with an awareness of the importance of the personalities and characters.
- A study of the major characters, e.g. Juno, Captain Boyle, and Joxer and the minor characters and how these characters relate to one another and how their relationships develop through the play.
- A study of the major themes of the play such as poverty, religion, nationalism, feminism, betrayal and reality and fantasy.
- The setting/environment helps develop plot and explore the themes of the play.
- The social and political background reflects the divisions between the characters.
- Religion is an important element in the play.

A02

A few points on methods – language, structure and form:

- Realist drama which portrays the real conditions of Dubliners during the civil war.
- O'Casey's use of dialect adds further realism to the play.
- Tragi-comedy. O'Casey creates humour in tragedy and tragedy in humour.
- Links with mythology – O'Casey took the characters of "Juno and the Paycock" from Greek mythology. Juno is the goddess of the household. She has been depicted riding a chariot driven by peacocks.
- Use of language – comic catchphrases, repetition, dialect and mispronunciation; misuse of language.

J.B. Priestley – *An Inspector Calls*

A01

A few points on textual detail:

- An understanding of the plot, the playwright and the context of the play.
- Written in 1945 just at the end of the Second World War but set in 1912 before the First World War.
- England in 1912 was very class conscious but by 1945, mainly because of the war, this was changing.
- Set in real time in the Birling's home.
- The atmosphere at the beginning of the play seems happy although there are some signs that all is not well.
- The different stories of characters when questioned by the Inspector.
- By the time Inspector Goole has finished, all the Birlings and Gerald are aware of the part they played in Eva/Daisy's death.
- Contrast between the reactions of the older and younger characters to this.

A02

A few points on methods – language, structure and form:

- We get Eva Smith's back story from Inspector Goole's individual questioning of the main characters.
- Dramatic irony. Contemporary audience in 1945 and modern audience know how wrong Mr Birling is when he makes his predictions. This puts the audience at an advantage over the characters.
- There is a lot of tension as each member of the family is found to have played a part in Eva's death. New pieces of information contribute to the story being constructed.
- The audience is drawn in to the story to find out what is going to happen next; what new information is going to come out and how each character will react.
- Inspector Goole is a very mysterious character. He controls and dominates the stage; standing up even to Mr Birling.
- The Inspector's method of showing a photograph of Eva/Daisy to individual characters he questions. Is it the same photograph?
- Inspector Goole's final speech is more like a sermon.
- All this mystery suggests that the Inspector is not a 'real' person. So, we are left wondering what is he? Is he a ghost? The name 'Goole' reminds us of 'ghoul'.
- Dramatic cliff-hanger ending.

Brian Friel – *Philadelphia, Here I Come!***A01**

A few points on textual detail:

- An understanding of the plot, the playwright and the context of the play.
- The play is set on the night before Gar O'Donnell is to leave for America from Ballybeg.
- He is chasing the American Dream.
- On his last night in Ireland a series of visitations, some real and some in his imagination, force him to confront the choices he's made.
- It is a play about relationships and exile.
- Gar is going to be exiled not just from Ireland but from his own past and especially his relationship with his father.
- Central theme of Escapist Fantasy. Every character is dissatisfied with their life and environment.

A02

A few points on methods – language, structure and form:

- Unusually the title of the play ends with an exclamation mark. What is the significance of this?
- May be regarded as a traditional exploration of 'coming of age'.
- Also an exploration of the complex contradictions that form personality.
- Friel's technique of using 'Public' and 'Private' Gar enabled him to portray past experiences and future fantasies.
- Not a conventional play. The plot develops in Gar's mind as he struggles with his past and his desire to have a new identity in America.
- Flashback Technique used to explore and idealise the past.
- Stream of consciousness.
- Internal monologue means the audience can hear Gar's private thoughts. Sometimes his thoughts are fragmentary adding to the realism.

Willy Russell – *Blood Brothers***A01**

A few points on textual detail:

- An understanding of the plot, the playwright and the context of the play.
- Russell shows the terrible effects of unemployment in Liverpool.
- Story of the twins – Edward and Mickey – separated as babies. Main characters – Mrs Johnston, Mrs Lyons, the Twins – and Linda.
- Russell explores how society is divided because of wealth – compare life chances of Edward and Mickey.
- Socially disadvantaged characters try to escape their drab life, e.g. Mrs Johnstone and her love of dancing.
- The basis of the tragedy in this play is that Mickey is doomed to failure no matter what he did because of his lack of money.
- At the end of the play the Narrator states the key theme of the play:
“And do we blame superstition for what came to pass?
Or could it be what we, the English, have come to know as class?”

A02

A few points on methods – language, structure and form:

- Use of a narrator who comments on the action, sets the scene and multi-roles as minor characters.
- The language is mainly realistic – normal conversation with differing dialects according to class.
- Russell uses the characters’ accents to emphasise differences due to class.
- Importance of music in the play. Russell uses songs to fill in for time passing and to emphasise the feelings and emotions of characters. Songs also provide background information, e.g. Marilyn Monroe sung by Mrs Johnstone in Act One.
- Chronological structure – apart from opening scene.
- Two acts. Begins before the birth of the twins and moves on seven years to when the boys meet as children. The second act follows the teenage Mickey and Edward through to adulthood. Focus on the pivotal events in their lives (e.g. career “choices” or lack of).
- The main characters can be regarded as social stereotypes.
- Themes: social class, influence of society on life chances, nature vs. nurture, friendship, fate or destiny, money.
- The stage directions are important as they show how the characters may be feeling when they speak.
- Use of symbol, e.g. Marilyn Monroe.

R C Sherriff – *Journey's End***A01**

A few points on textual detail:

- An understanding of the plot, the playwright and the context of the play.
- Sherriff served in the First World War so had first-hand experience of war and the world of the play.
- Divided into 3 acts covering the events of 4 days.
- Only one setting – the dugout. It is very important as Sherriff wanted to portray the claustrophobic conditions and real experiences of the officers.
- Explores relationships between the men in such a close situation and under extreme conditions.
- Not written as an anti-war play.
- Explores the nature of heroism – Raleigh and his hero-worship of Stanhope; Stanhope, winner of the Military Cross, Raleigh and Osborne taking part in the raid; Hibbert’s attempts to get sent back to England by feigning illness.
- Other themes: comradeship, the stupidity of war, social class, how the men deal with fear.

A02

A few points on methods – language, structure and form:

- Simple structure and setting which adds to the tensions and suspense about what is going to happen.
- Naturalistic drama using ordinary language.
- Detailed stage directions are given to add to the ‘real’ appearance of the location.
- Dramatic irony is used, e.g. when Hibbert tries to get sent back to England as the audience already knows Stanhope is aware of the ploy and ready with a response.
- Sherriff varies the mood in the dugout, e.g. sadness, humour (through Mason), anger, fear, anxiety and tension.
- Use of contrast, e.g. when we first see Stanhope he is with Trotter which emphasises Stanhope’s heroic-looking physical attributes.
- Use of coincidence as a plot device, e.g. the way that Osborne, Stanhope and Raleigh all come from the same town and school.

Simon Stephens – *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time***A01**

A few points on textual detail:

- An understanding of the plot, the playwright and the context of the play.
- Set in 1998 mainly in Swindon.
- Main character is Christopher Boone who is mildly autistic.
- Writes a ‘book’ chronicling his experiences investigating the death of Wellington, his neighbour’s dog.
- Through his investigations, Christopher uncovers his mother’s and father’s infidelity and that his mother is still alive.
- Christopher undertakes a journey to London to find his mother.
- Play ends on a happy note with Christopher settled, having passed his exam and looking forward to his future.

A02

A few points on methods – language, structure and form:

- Use of narrator. The characters come to life as the teacher reads.
- The actors are on stage throughout the entire action of the play and play multiple characters.
- The stage setting/structure allowing for transition between settings.
- Audience can share Christopher’s unusual perspective on the world.
- Audience can empathise with Christopher because we hear his thought processes and do not just see his actions.
- Symbols used – the murder investigation, mathematics and puzzles.
- Christopher’s mother is the only other character from whom we hear a first-person point of view.
- Play charts Christopher’s development of greater independence.

3: ASSESSMENT OF UNIT 2 SECTION A: DRAMA

This is an open book examination and candidates can bring an unannotated copy of the play they have studied in to the examination room. This section of the examination lasts 1 hour and is worth 25% of the qualification. Candidates will be asked to answer one question from a choice of two for each play.

The questions below, from the Specimen Assessment Materials, are indicative of the proposed format for questions:

1. O'Casey: *Juno and the Paycock*

- (a) With reference to the ways O'Casey **presents** hardship, show how far you agree that Mrs Boyle and Mary are **responsible for their own hardship**.
- (b) Look again at the extract from Act 3, beginning at the top of page 136 with Johnny's words, "How could it be a wash-out?" and ending on page 139 with Johnny's words, "It's a wonder you're not ashamed to show your face here, after what has happened."
With reference to the ways O'Casey **presents** Johnny in the extract and elsewhere in the play, show how far you agree that Johnny **deserves sympathy**.

2. Priestley: *An Inspector Calls*

- (a) With reference to the ways Priestley **presents** Gerald, show how far you agree that he **feels the most guilty** of the characters in the play.
- (b) Look again at the extract from Act 1, beginning on page 4 with Birling's words, "No we won't. It's one of the happiest..." and ending on page 8 with the stage direction (*Laughs complacently*).
With reference to the ways Priestley **presents** class in the extract and elsewhere in the play, show how far you agree that the play explores **class attitudes**.

3. Friel: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

- (a) With reference to the ways Friel **presents** S B O'Donnell, show how far you agree that he **fails as a father**.
- (b) Look again at the extract from Act 1, beginning on page 58 with the stage direction *There follows an uneasy silence* and ending on page 60 with the stage direction *Another silence descends*.
With reference to the ways that Friel **presents** truth in the extract and elsewhere in the play, show how far you agree that some characters **avoid the truth**.

4. Russell: *Blood Brothers*

- (a) With reference to the ways Russell **presents** events in the play, show how far you agree that the deaths of Mickey and Edward are **shocking**.
- (b) Look again at the extract from Act One, beginning at the top of page 7 with the stage direction *MRS LYONS enters*, and ending near the middle of page 10 with the stage direction *There is a pause before MRS JOHNSTONE nods*.
With reference to the ways Russell **presents** Mrs Johnstone in the extract and elsewhere in the play, show how far you agree that she is **admirable**.

5. Sherriff: *Journey's End*

- (a) With reference to the ways Sherriff **presents** Stanhope, show how far you agree that he is **an admirable character**.
- (b) Look again at the extract from Act 1, beginning on page 24 with the stage direction *OSBORNE lays his hand gently on STANHOPE'S shoulder* and ending on page 25 with the stage direction *STANHOPE gives a deep sigh and begins to breathe heavily*.
With reference to the ways Sherriff **presents** friendship in the extract and elsewhere in the play, show how far you agree that friendship **helps the soldiers to cope** with the pressures of war.

6 Stephens: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

- (a) With reference to the ways Stephens **presents** the challenges in Christopher's life, show that the play **encourages understanding** of these challenges.
- (b) Look again at the extract from Act 1, beginning on page 79 with Christopher's words, "I'm going to live with you..." and ending on page 80 with Judy's words, "No. Ok. That's ok."
With reference to the ways Stephens **presents** Christopher Boone's mother in the extract and elsewhere in the play, show how far you agree that she is a **caring mother**.

As you can see, one of the two questions will have as its starting point an extract from the play but candidates are then expected to go beyond this in answering the question.

Both types of questions are addressing A01 and A02 so candidates are expected to respond using relevant textual detail. They should not only describe or explain the selected details but also be able to evaluate their usage and effectiveness. They also need to explain how language, structure and form have been employed by their chosen dramatist in relation to the particular character or theme in the question.

The Specimen Assessment Materials for this unit also include detailed indicative content for each of the exemplar questions. Mark Schemes and a Marking Grid are also provided.

4. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Websites:

www.teachit.co.uk
www.bbcbitesize.co.uk

Film/TV versions/documentaries:

Various versions of productions of the plays or documentaries about them are available on YouTube.

Juno and the Paycock – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuH5PRny4G8>

An Inspector Calls – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vukp3EFVweQ>

Philadelphia, Here I Come! – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSPUIsvQeYk>

Blood Brothers – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9mbfRiZ2Bk&list=PLTUTE7blqHbDdTMWB3rFsdXXgSJCd5xZf>

Journey's End – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y98QdRmLfbQ>

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pv8ihJkDZk>

