

# GCSE Drama Written Exam

## Section A- Set Text

*Blood Brothers* – Willy Russell  
*Death of a Salesman* – Arthur Miller  
*Find Me* – Olwen Wymark  
*Gizmo* – Alan Ayckbourn  
*Kindertransport* – Diane Samuels  
*Missing Dan Nolan* – Mark Wheeler  
*Misterman* – Enda Walsh

For the purpose of this session I will be referencing **Blood Brothers** as this is what our centre teaches but the structures and revision tips apply to any of these set texts.



Oxford Cambridge and RSA



# Revision retrieval

1. How long is the whole exam?
2. How long should you spend on Section A?
3. If you have extra time how much time should you spend on Section A?
4. How many questions are there in total?
5. How many marks is Section A worth in total?
6. What could the questions be on? Create a list.



# Revision retrieval

1. How long is the whole exam? 1 hour 30mins
2. How long should you spend on Section A? 55 mins
3. If you have **extra time** how much time should you spend on Section A? An **extra 12 minutes for sec A.**
4. How many questions are there in total? 8
5. How many marks is Section A worth in total? 50
6. What could the questions be on? Create a list.

Acting	Design
Directing	Sound
Rehearsal and Improvisation techniques	Costume
Vocal Skills	Lighting
Physical skills	Set and stage types



**There are always 8 question and follow this pattern:**

Q1- 4 marks

Q2- 4 marks

Q3- 6 marks

Q4- 6 marks

Q5- 6 marks

Q6- 8 marks

Q7- 8 marks

Q8- 8 marks

✓ **TOP TIP**

**Start at the back** on question 8 and work your way though the paper as these questions are worth more marks.



# Writing structure

**POINT**- Intention as a designer, actor or director. WHAT do you intend to show through your design/acting/directing skills.

**EVIDENCE**- Use specific drama terminology and rule of 3. HOW will you demonstrate these skills (use rule of 3-describe using 3 adjectives).

**EXPLAIN**- Explain WHY you have made these choices.

**LINK** - back to the question and the Social Historical Context.

There is no requirement to ANALYSE or EVALUATE (Section B only)



# Importance of Social and Historical Context

Mind map the Social, Historical Context:

You NEED to link all your explanations/justifications to the Social Historical Context!



**Time period-** 1960s-80s

**Location-** Liverpool

**Genre-** Tragedy

**Style-** Non naturalistic



**Political-** Conservative Britain (Thatcher's government)

Unemployment, factories shutting down 'Sign of the times'.

**Social Class** (Working class and middle class)

**Family**

**Poverty**

**Work and unemployment**

**Superstition**

**Loss/grief**

You NEED to link all your explanations/justifications to the Social Historical Context!



# Lighting

Describe the type of light used in a key moment and then describe how it was used and for what effect

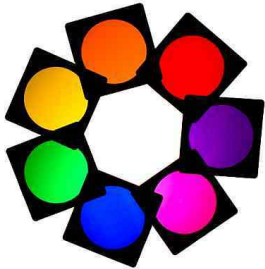
(Use the rule of 3 to describe each light: colour, angle, stage position)



**Gobo** - a metal template positioned in front of a beam of light to create shapes of light on stage, eg a window frame or tree



**Barn doors** - metal flaps that can open and close, covering the left, right, top, and bottom of the light. They help create a narrow line of light, either vertical or horizontal.



**Gel** - a coloured filter that can be placed on a lantern in front of a beam of light to change the colour



**Fresnel** - used for a softer edged effect, with a diffusing lens in front of the lamp. It is useful for good overall light when used with others. Coloured filters can be used with this lamp.



**Follow Spot** - a tight beam of moveable light that can be used to highlight a particular area on stage, often used to highlight and follow a particular actor



**Practical** - a light that is used as part of the set design, eg a desk lamp or torch





## 8 Mark lighting example

**Question 8) As a lighting designer explain how you would use lighting to develop drama in the opening scene or section.**

*As a lighting designer I would want to develop and enhance the mood and atmosphere in the opening scene. The opening shows the ending tragic events, and sets the tone for the play.*

*One way I would do this is to use a blue gel colour that washes over the stage floor. I believe this would set the cold and tragic mood and atmosphere and therefore help to develop the drama.*

*A second way I would use light is to then layer two bright spotlights over each of the main characters; Mickey and Edward to draw the audiences attention to their death and further develop the genre of tragedy. I would also use a follow spot on Mrs Johnstone as she moves centre stage between the two bodies to highlight her grief.*

*Finally I would like to use a gobo to project an image of the two brothers hands together on the backdrop which would develop the drama as it develops the genre of tragedy as once they were close in bond but this has been shattered at the end. This would enhance the sombre atmosphere at the beginning of the opening of the play as it reminds the audience of the loss.*

## 8 Mark lighting example –Mark it together

**Question 8) As a lighting designer explain how you would use lighting to develop drama in the opening scene or section. POINT EVIDENCE EXPLAIN**

*As a lighting designer I would want to develop and enhance the mood and atmosphere in the opening scene. The opening shows the ending tragic events, and sets the tone for the play.*

- 1. One way** I would do this is to use a blue gel colour that washes over the stage floor. I believe this would set the cold and tragic mood and atmosphere and therefore help to develop the drama. **A second way** I would use light is to then layer two bright spotlights over each of the main characters; Mickey and Edward to draw the audiences attention to their death and further develop the genre of tragedy. I would also use a follow spot on Mrs Johnstone as she moves centre stage between the two bodies to highlight her grief.
- 2. Finally** I would like to use a gobo to project an image of the two brothers hands together on the backdrop which would develop the drama as it develops the genre of tragedy as once they were close in bond but this has been shattered at the end. This would enhance the sombre atmosphere at the beginning of the opening of the play as it reminds the audience of the loss.



# WWW-Examiner comments

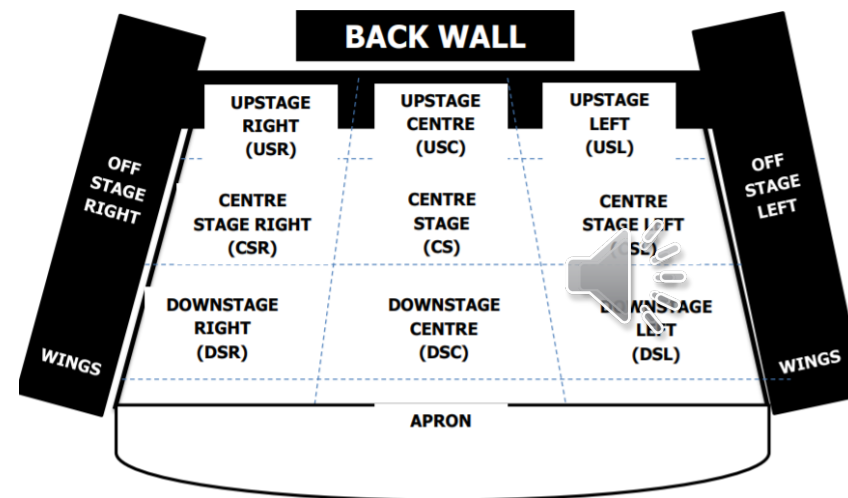
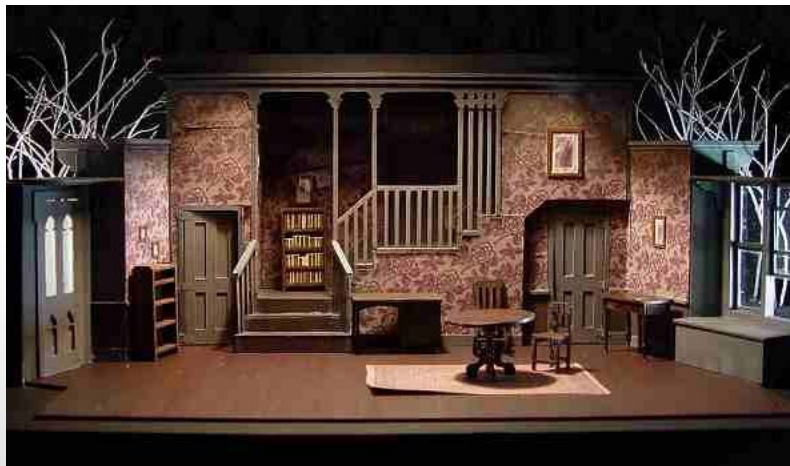
- Point/Intention is clear and links to the Q at the beginning.
- 2 Clear and detailed PEE Paragraphs
- Evidence is specific- rule of 3 applied (3 ways to describe the design).
- Explanation links back to the Q



# Set

Describe 1) The backdrop 2) A flat 3) A truck or items to dress the set  
(Use the rule of 3 to describe each item)

- **Backdrops** – painted/printed on material hung in front of the back wall to show location
- **Flat** – wood or frame canvas used to create a background
- **Trucks** – moveable key items on wheels
- **Dressing the set**– with key items e.g chairs, rugs.



# Set Design Question

*Describe how a set design could be used to communicate a setting (place and time) for one key moment in your performance text. (8 Marks)*

*Key moment:*

So how do we approach the question?



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# Costume

Describe 3 items 1)Top 2) bottoms 3)shoes  
(Use the rule of 3 to describe each item)



- **Colour** – time period
- **Cut** – tailored or loose
- **Condition** – new, worn or second-hand
- **Fabric** – wool, cotton, silk etc
- **Fit** – tight, loose, oversized
- **Style** – posh, workwear, casual, formal
- **Pattern**– links to time period



# 6 Mark- design example:

**Use rule of 3:**  
Each item described in 3 ways. (Size, colour, condition, fabric, style etc)

**Mickey**

Messy Hair, not combed - contrasts to Eddie/ comparison to rich and poor twin.

Belly button showing - tells us that he cannot afford clothes his size.



Muddy/brown/old /torn shirt and pants to show that he is poor.

Shoe laces untied and legs are grubby- links to personality that he doesn't care and likes to get dirty.

An annotated sketch can support your marks if you struggle with extended writing.

Costume	Justification
<b>Top:</b> An <u>oversized</u> , <u>brown</u> , <u>woollen</u> jumper	This would show that....
<b>Bottoms:</b> A pair of <u>tight</u> <u>denim</u> shorts that are <u>stained</u> .	This emphasises the lack of wealth Mrs J has and can't afford to.....
<b>Shoes:</b> A pair of old, scuffed converse trainers that appear too big	This style reflects the time period as converse were.....Being too big shows that.....





# Costume question-Live

Choose a character.....

Identify three items of costume this character could wear that will show the audience something about their character.

Explain what each item of costume shows the audience about the character (6 marks).

Item of costume	Explanation



# Sound

Describe the type of sound used in a key moment and then describe how the sound was performed and for what effect

(Use the rule of 3 to describe: Style, tempo, volume )

- **Pre-set-** Is the sound or music played before the play whilst the audience enter the auditorium.
- **Diegetic** - Sound the characters can hear within the world of a play, eg the radio, a gun shot or broken glass sound effect.
- **Non-diegetic** - Sound that exists outside of the world of a play, eg narration or underscore.



# Sound examples

## **POINT/INTENTION:**

As a sound designer I would build the suspense and tension in the scene

**EVIDENCE:** by using a non-diegetic instrumental beat that builds throughout the scene. It would then stop with the conclusion of a gun shot sound effect.

**EXPLAIN:** This would help put the audience on the edge of their seats until the climax has been reached.



# Acting Skills

Use your subject literacy matt or KO and learn these key words and what they mean. These are just a few:

VOCAL SKILLS	PHYSICAL SKILLS
<b>TONE</b> ( e.g aggressive, excitable, questioning etc)	<b>FACIAL EXPRESSIONS</b> (head position, eye lien, furrowed brows, pursed lips)
<b>PITCH</b> (High/low)	<b>EYE LINE</b> (e.g piercing, wandering, fixed)
<b>PACE</b> (slow, fast, building)	<b>POSTURE</b> (broad, slouched, crooked)
<b>PAUSE</b> (This helps to show....)	<b>GESTURE</b> (clasped hands, open arms)
<b>VOLUME/PROJECTION</b> (Loud/quiet/building)	<b>MANNERISM</b> (A repetitive movement e.g scratching head, rubbing hands etc)
<b>TIMBRE</b> (robotic, nasal, staccato)	<b>MOVEMENT</b> (dynamics, impact on proxemics)
<b>ACCENT</b> (e.g Liverpool)	<b>PACE</b> (e.g slow, controlled, fast, building)



# x6 mark questions- the grid

Voice (Vocal skill)	Justification

Write approx. **3-4 lines** for your justification **linking** your answer back to the knowledge of your play.

Describe **how** the skills is used e.g **Fast pace** (NOT just pace)

Physicality (P Skills)	Justification



# Example- Mrs Johnstone

Use of voice or movement	Justification
Hunched shoulders/posture	Mrs Johnstone is a working class character in Blood Brothers. She also finds out she is pregnant with twins at the beginning of the play and she is worried about finances. Using hunched shoulders and a stiff posture would show the worry and stress she is carrying in her body.
Liverpool accent	Mrs Johnstone lives in Liverpool. She has a broad Liverpool accent to showcase that she is a working class woman who has not been taught a RP accent, she has not had the education. This passes down to her children.
Fast pace	Mrs Johnstone's life is fast paced, she has 7 children with two more on the way, she works and is a single parent. She is also working class so is not in control of her voice compared to someone from an upper class background like Mrs Lyons. Her worry and stress also makes her speak faster.



# Rehearsal techniques/directing

1. Role on the wall
2. Given Circumstances
3. Emotional Memory
4. Hot-seating
5. Super objective
6. Units and objectives-meaning of each line/when it changes
7. Script interpretation-Stage directions
8. Exercises to help physicality
9. Exercises to help your vocal skills
10. Research

✓ You must be able to explain how each of these will develop the characterisation/acting skills.



# 8 mark questions- extended answers

There is no structure provided for you. You need to write 2 or 3 detailed PEEL Paragraphs independently:

## Point (WHAT your Intention is)

- *As a set designer I would intent to communicate.....*
- *As a lighting designer I would want to show....*
- *As an actor/director I would want to intend.....*
- *In the rehearsal I would want to develop.....*

Link to the wording in the question

## Evidence (HOW you will show/do this)

*I would do this by.....*

Describe in detail using your **subject vocabulary** e.g if its an item of costume-describe it using 3 design adjectives (colour, condition, style, fabric).

Explain (WHY would this work?)- *This would effectively help to.....* link to **Social**  
**Historical Context.**



Link- link back to the question and use the wording of the question.



# For 8 mark questions

## ✓ TOP TIP- Rule of 3 for evidence

- **DON'T:** Simply state what skills were used without how it was used e.g. *'they used their tone to show.....'*
- **DO:** State what type of skill and how they used it e.g. *'they used an aggressive tone, deep pitch, and slow pace to show how anger was building but they were trying to be controlled by slowing their pace down.'*



Rule of 3



# Over to you

Create a revision card/posters on each of the knowledge organisers (Sound, costume, light, set, acting, directing, rehearsal, improvisation etc)

Practice exam structure: PEEL

Stretch yourself to the 'rule of 3' for all evidence/examples.

Practice past exam questions using these tips and in timed conditions.

Go to your teacher for feedback and extra support.



Best of luck to all of you 😊