

DRAMA and Theatre studies

**A Level Transition Pack**

**1 – READ THROUGH AND COMPLETE TASKS WITHIN ‘THE IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA’ AND ‘PREPARATION TASKS’**

***The importance of Drama:***

View and consider these videos from Pearson which outline the **pleasures and skills** to be gained from further study of Drama.

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3DGHtpuV28**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3DGHtpuV28)

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZknti9f-Oc**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZknti9f-Oc)

And the **value of theatre** itself?

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXldtQOyMFs**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXldtQOyMFs)

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=206olNq6g6A**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=206olNq6g6A)

The following videos introduce you to a range of **career opportunities** in theatre.

[**https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJgBmjHpqgs5SvR8xSnvuHcFTbDl\_hta6**](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJgBmjHpqgs5SvR8xSnvuHcFTbDl_hta6)

***Specification in brief:***

**Component 1 – Devising (40%) – practical and written/oral**

* Devise an original performance piece.
* Use one key extract from a performance text and a theatre practitioner as stimuli.
* Centre choice of text and practitioner.
* Performer or designer routes available.
* Portfolio (either written or spoken) = 60 marks; Performance = 20 marks

**Component 2 – Text in Performance (20%) – practical**

* A group performance/design realisation of one key extract from a performance text.
* A monologue or duologue performance/design realisation from one key extract from a different performance text.
* Group performance = 36 marks; Monologue or duologue = 24 marks

**Component 3 – Theatre Makers in Practice (40%) – written exam**

* Section A: Live Theatre Evaluation

20 marks: Students answer one extended response question from a choice of two requiring them to

analyse and evaluate a live theatre performance they have seen in light of a given statement.

* Section B: Page to Stage: Realising a Performance Text (EQUUS by Peter Shaffer)

36 marks: Students answer two extended response questions based on an unseen extract from the

performance text they have studied. Students will demonstrate how they, as theatre makers, intend to realise the extract in performance. Students answer from the perspective of a performer and a designer.

* Section C: Interpreting a Performance Text (Antigone by Sophocles)

24 marks: Students will answer one extended response question from a choice of two based on an

unseen named section from their chosen performance text. Students will demonstrate how their re-imagined production concept will communicate ideas to a contemporary audience. Students will also need to outline how the work of their chosen theatre practitioner has influenced their overall production concept and demonstrate an awareness of the performance text in its original performance conditions.

***Programme of study (Year 12):***

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|  | **Year 12** |
| **Autumn 1** | Team building + baseline assessment  Component 1 (Devising) Practitioners Introduction |
| **Autumn 2** | Component 3 Section C (Interpreting a Performance Text) ‘Antigone’ |
| **Spring 1** | Component 3 Section A (Live Theatre Evaluation) |
| **Spring 2** | Component 3 Section B (Page to Stage) ‘Equus’ |
| **Summer 1** | Component 3 Section B (Page to Stage) ‘Equus’ |
| **Summer 2** | Component 1 (Devising) Structure & Development |

***Preparation tasks:***

* The best preparation is to become as familiar as possible with the sheer range and potential of live theatre. Access to live theatre is currently a bit limited. However, the National Theatre is offering you access to a great range of its recorded productions. Here are some.

Of the selection available, the following productions have supporting videos which should extend your awareness of both background and genre.

*Antigone (ancient Greek tragedy):*

<https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/video?docid=do-9781350997684&tocid=do-9781350997684_6120704226001>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjrcNUOS2bc&list=PLJgBmjHpqgs7TVOYAmrHu1JaAcf6sA_rd>

*Hamlet (Shakespearian tragedy):*

<https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/video?docid=do-9781350935174&tocid=do-9781350935174_6083692841001>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcoHJWdETnw&list=PLJgBmjHpqgs6KHxV6Nu5BPpHTh-fT1F5T>

*Jane Eyre (Devised work):*

<https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/video?docid=do-9781350997738&tocid=do-9781350997738_6120709535001>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mJ02mSvbEM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_CgP6eLF1A>

A copy of Equus is available on request.

**2 – READ THROUGH RESOURCES ON SET TEXTS AND BULLET POINT FINDINGS:**

***Resources:*** [Microsoft Word - A Level Equus\_ER (pearson.com)](https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/Drama-and-Theatre/2016/teaching-and-learning-materials/a-level-set-text-guide-equus.pdf)

*Background information on* ***Equus***

*Key practitioners studied during the course:*

*Bertolt Brecht –*

*Aims and Intentions*

Bertolt Brecht saw Theatre as an active instrument for social and political change. Brechtian theatre aims to instruct and educate. Brecht was a poet, director and playwright and through his theatre practice he wanted to encourage audiences to reject the idea that their lives were predetermined and impossible to improve.

Brecht evolved what became known as ‘epic theatre’ and this style of performance was in ideological opposition to the theatre of emotion under Stanislavskian rule. Brecht wanted the audience to question and become critical observers rather than passive audience members. His intention was to destroy illusion and reveal truth through action. Brecht often referred to his audience as ‘jury-like’ as he wanted his audience to consider, reflect and make judgements. One of the main ways in which he made this possible for audiences was by interrupting the action and developing a sense of empathy for characters and their situations.

Brechtian theatre aims to distance the audience. It uses non-naturalistic theatrical conventions to create what he referred to as the ‘Verfremdungseffekt.’ Often referred to as ‘distancing’ or ‘to make strange’. Brecht wanted his audiences to ‘look again’ at something familiar and therefore juxtaposition, contradiction and montage were often at the heart of his productions. Through distancing his audiences, Brecht was able to get his audiences to both watch, understand and think. He also wanted to make his audiences laugh and saw Spass (fun) as a great tool to make his audience critical.

Brecht reminded the audience the performance that they were viewing was a construct, not a reality, and that as with reality, it is open to change. As a result, he was keen to show the ‘mechanics of theatre’ to his audiences.

*Key Features of Brechtian Methodology*

* Stage pictures clearly communicate characters/themes/situation.
* Contradiction/juxtaposition/dialectical approach to distance the audience.
* Episodic/non-linear/use of montage.
* Character names often reflect status / social type.
* Use of third person speak/use of narration to distance the emotion of the scene.
* ‘Dual capacity’ – actors and characters are revealed to the audience.
* Use of music/song/cabaret/spass (fun).
* Use of a ‘half curtain’/actors change costume on stage/machinery on display.
* Interrupting the narrative fluidity of the production.
* Minimal set design/use of placards and signs
* Adapted parables/stories to explore political/social contemporary issues.
* Gestic acting style/presentation acting/multi-role characterisation.
* Costume as representative/visual shortcuts to characterisation/attitude.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62-gYcO6jrY>

*Jerzy Grotowski –*

*Aims and intentions*

Jerzy Grotowski was a theatre director, educator and creator of acting methods. He was born in 1933 in Rzeszów in Poland and died in 1999 in Pontedera, Italy. He is considered to have been one of the great reformers of 20th century theatre.

He was known for his intense actor training in Poland in the 1960s and 1970s.

Jerzy Grotowski and his small groups of actors were known for experimenting with many different aspects of theatre: spiritualistic, ritualistic and physical and also the nature of role and the relationship between actor and spectator. His acting system is probably the most complete approach to role since Stanislavski.

He invented the term 'Poor Theatre': a style of performance that got rid of all extraneous parts of theatre. This meant there were no lavish costumes, complicated props or detailed sets.

Relied on skill of actors and required only a few props.

Grotowski enjoyed working in unconventional spaces. He liked the audience to be all around the performance area or in amongst the actors.

He used the physical skill of his performers rather than costumes and minimal props to become other significant objects; building on Brecht's thoughts and ideas on performance.

*Key Features of Grotowski’s Methodology*

* Main influences: Brecht, Stanislavsky and Meyerhold.
* Focused on actor training and probably most intensive actor training since Stanislavsky
* Poor Theatre gets rid of excesses of theatre
* Opposite to commercial theatre - the complete antithesis of the star-led shows you often see in the West End
* Grotowski believed theatre could never compete with television and film so it shouldn't attempt to
* The majority of Poor Theatre works never made it to performance
* The ones that did were performed only once to a very small audience
* The word 'paratheatre' is often used in relation to Grotowski - 'para' meaning 'beyond'
* With 'paratheatre' Grotowski experimented with actors in training programs and other non-performed pieces.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ScsvWtMZWo>

*Punchdrunk –*

*Aims and Intentions*

Punchdrunk’s work reimagines the possibilities of performance. There are many ways to describe experiences that take place in non-traditional theatre settings including ‘immersive’, ‘promenade’, ‘site-specific’ but Punchdrunk primarily describes its work as ‘site-sympathetic’ as work is created in response to the architecture and atmosphere of a space.

Punchdrunk is well known for its epic mask productions, however this represents only one of the company’s forms of work. The breadth of Punchdrunk’s work is much broader and can loosely be categorised into three forms: mask, radical promenade and enrichment.

• Mask show is shorthand for the large-scale mask productions where the audience experience a world constructed within a vast building and storytelling is told through a distinctive looping narrative.

• Radical Promenade reinvents traditional promenade theatre where audiences are led around spaces. In Punchdrunk’s radical promenade the audience are given a role. Work is heavily scripted but there is direct interaction with the audience as they are crucial in helping the characters complete a mission or task.

• Enrichment work takes Punchdrunk’s innovative practice into schools and communities with the same commitment to exemplary design and performance that defines large scale shows for adults. Similarly to radical promenade the audience are given a clear role and they interact directly with the characters. Books are often used as a starting point when creating the narrative.

Every Punchdrunk show is crafted through the orchestration of multiple and multisensory theatrical elements including lighting, soundscape, design and special effects all conceived to leave the audience feeling ‘punch drunk’.

Designers use a cinematic level of detail to immerse audiences in the world of the show. Every design element from dressing to use of objects are ‘touch real’ and carefully considered in relation to specific characters and the overall narrative.

Punchdrunk aims to reinvent the theatre experience for audiences who are often ‘turned off’ by traditional theatre. Punchdrunk are appealing to a video-gaming and experience hungry generation with their multi-sensory and interactive approach.

One distinctive feature of a mask show is a One-on-One: a mini performance for one audience member at a time. The audience member is encouraged to remove their masks, and this is the only time they are ‘seen’ by the character. Audience members usually leave one-on-ones with a gift or memento to remind them of their interaction.

*Key features of Punchdrunk Methodology*

* Punchdrunk always puts the audience at the centre of their work, rejecting the traditional understanding of the audience’s role as passive.
* Productions take place in unconventional spaces: warehouses, across cities, tunnels, museums.
* The audience is always given a clear role: perhaps a ghostly observer hidden behind a mask, or an adventurer with a feeling of agency and a mission to complete.
* Multi-sensory production values using light / sound / smell / touch / taste to awaken all the senses.
* In large scale mask shows a nonverbal language, gesture, movement motif and physical theatre is used. By freeing the narrative from spoken text the audience are encouraged to enter and leave scenes when they wish.
* Mood & Atmosphere central to audience experience.
* There is no distinction between performance space and audience space. Audiences are encouraged to make their own journey to discover the narrative and action.
* As the name suggests, in a mask shows audience members wear masks. The masks provide anonymity, prevent communication between audience members, and show a distinction between audience members and the audience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ktpes0qMZ0>

***Research tasks:***

Using the Chart below, research and fill in basic information about the Theatre Histories, Styles and Practitioners listed. This will form part of your Drama folders and aims to give you an initial overview of these key areas of Drama and Theatre Studies. The section, “Detailed Example of one rehearsal or performance technique used”, will be used during Year 12 lessons, over the year, so please make sure you have practical examples to use/share.

**3 – COMPLETE RESEARCH ON EACH THEATRE TRADITION, STYLE OR PRACTITIONER LISTED IN TABLE BELOW. Much information can be sourced amongst these resources and those already shared:**

[**https://www.youtube.com/user/ntdiscovertheatre**](https://www.youtube.com/user/ntdiscovertheatre)

[**https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare/**](https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare/)

[**https://augustoboaltheatreofoppressed.weebly.com/information-of-augusto-boal.html**](https://augustoboaltheatreofoppressed.weebly.com/information-of-augusto-boal.html)

[**https://www.franticassembly.co.uk/**](https://www.franticassembly.co.uk/)

[**https://www.kneehigh.co.uk/**](https://www.kneehigh.co.uk/)

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| **Theatre History/Style/**  **Practitioner** | **Time Period/**  **When Working?** | **Basic Principles/**  **Intentions** | **Detailed Example of one rehearsal or performance technique used** | **Interesting Points** | **Links** |
| Greek theatre |  |  |  |  |  |
| Elizabethan theatre |  |  |  |  |  |
| Commedia dell’Arte |  |  |  |  |  |
| Melodrama |  |  |  |  |  |

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| **Theatre History/Style/**  **Practitioner** | **Time Period/**  **When Working?** | **Basic Principles/**  **Intentions** | **Detailed Example of one rehearsal or performance technique used** | **Interesting Points** | **Links** |
| Naturalism |  |  |  |  |  |
| Expressionism |  |  |  |  |  |
| Constantin  Stanislavski |  |  |  |  |  |
| Bertolt Brecht |  |  |  |  |  |
| Antonin Artaud |  |  |  |  |  |

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| **Theatre History/Style/**  **Practitioner** | **Time Period/**  **When Working?** | **Basic Principles/**  **Intentions** | **Detailed Example of one rehearsal or performance technique used** | **Interesting Points** | **Links** |
| Jerzy Grotowski |  |  |  |  |  |
| Augusto Boal |  |  |  |  |  |
| Frantic Assembly |  |  |  |  |  |
| Kneehigh |  |  |  |  |  |
| Punchdrunk |  |  |  |  |  |