

Question Focus on Acting



Remember you are:

- evaluating and analysing a live television production
- spending about 25 minutes answering this section
- choosing one of the two options
- naming the performance, the company and the location.

Remember: The questions could vary and focus on the Director's work, interpretation and style, performance conventions, spatial relationships on stage and the relationship between the performer and the audience.

Important Things!

Remember: Read the question carefully, use the bullet points to help you. Give your personal **OPINION** as a member of the audience.

INTERPRETATION AND STYLE:

The style of the production in question must be discussed, e.g. Musical, Naturalistic or Symbolic Theatre; then describe the shape of the set and the type of set. All of these are the Director's choice. The director might have challenged a convention and staged a naturalistic production on a round or traverse stage. Most Musicals are set on a proscenium stage, in order to get a variety of sets and stage equipment. So decide if the Director has stuck to a normal interpretation of the style or if he/she has experimented. Then you can discuss the Director's interpretation in one or two pieces (depending on the question). Discuss what was on the stage or the performance space in terms of set, equipment and props and then you may discuss the Director's choice of light and sound to create mood. Go on to discuss the style of costumes, the colours, the hair and the make-up.

Remember to use a lot of terminology.

PERFORMING CONVENTIONS:

Again, decide on the performance's convention and style. The director will have decided on the complete picture whilst working with the actors and the designers. In a Musical, did the Director stick to the conventional styles? Did the Director use many sets and equipment, sophisticated lighting, complex costumes, also using a lot of space? This is usually a normal feature of similar shows. Nevertheless, the Director might have experimented and set the Musical on a bare stage with only a little set and equipment. This would break the usual conventions. The show you saw might reflect the usual conventions of staging, e.g. Naturalistic show on a proscenium stage, Symbolic show on a bare stage and using a more obscure set. You will need to discuss the Director's interpretation of all the elements in the piece – set, lighting, sound and decide whether his or her vision had succeeded or not. Remember also to mention the acting, and whether this was typical and followed the usual conventions, e.g. Realistic acting in a Naturalistic Drama.

Remember to use a lot of terminology.

RELATIONSHIPS SPATIAL ON STAGE:

Discuss the production style, the stage shape and the size of the space. Specify on a specific part of parts, depending on the question. The director will have decided on the characters' equipment from the acting space and how and when they interact, e.g. the actor's locations on stage, the space, or lack of space, between them, their response, or lack of response, to each other. You may also refer to how the actors use pieces of the set or equipment in the space, and the significance of that. The Director might have created a series of moving patterns for actors and it is possible to interpret a theme or meaning throughout them. Remember that the size of the space varies from show to show and the Director's challenge is always to use the space to its full potential. There might be a huge cast on stage, but only a few actors. Nevertheless, the spatial relationship is essential and it can create a particular mood.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PERFORMER AND THE AUDIENCE:

This depends on the style of the production, e.g. Naturalistic, Brechtian. The stage shape, and the audience position, is important. If the show was in a small, narrow theatre, there would be a close and claustrophobic relationship between the audience and the actors, which is different to being a member of the audience in a large theatre like the West End. Nevertheless, actors can engage our attention on all kinds of stages and make us laugh, cry or sympathise. The actor can create a special presence on stage and get the audience to relate, e.g. through his/her voice, movements, responses, facial response, his/her use of space and interaction with others. Choose a special piece or pieces of the production (depending on the question) and explain how the actor or actors gained your attention.

Question Focus on Design



Remember you are:

- evaluating and analysing a live theatre production
- spending about 25 minutes answering this section
- choosing one of the two options
- naming the performance, the company and the location.

Remember: Questions can vary and can focus on the following: LIGHT, SOUND, SET and PROPS, COSTUME, MAKE-UP and HAIR, ATMOSPHERE and MOOD, and USE OF SPACE.

Important Things!

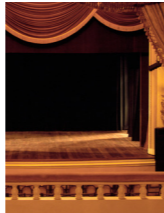
Remember: Please read the question carefully and use the bullet points to help you. Give your personal OPINION as a member of the audience.



COSTUMES MAKE-UP AND HAIR:

You will need to start by discussing the production style, e.g. Musical, Naturalistic or Symbolic Drama; then the period, venue and time. Choose the characters that are a good example of costume, make-up and hair design. You can discuss the costume's fabric, colours and style. The colour might symbolise the character's emotion or motivation and helps the interpretation. You can discuss the costume in detail from head to toe, giving your opinion on the effectiveness of design. Also discuss the costume's condition and quality and also how this lead the audience to judge or sympathise with the character.

Remember - The hair and make-up will need to be discussed and their effect explained, e.g. messy hair, white make-up, a lot of lipstick.



USE OF SPACE:

Explain what was the set's production style and also, was it essential to the shape of the stage? This will give an idea of the size of the space. The stage might be narrow and the set might be bare to give fair attention and a chance for the actors to use as much space as possible. If so, how were the locations created? Was there a change in atmosphere? Did a particular light suggest that? Were simple levels changed from one area of space to another? Was the space meant to be closed in order to create the theme of frustration and boredom? How did the actors make the most of the space they had? If the production was on a wide stage, there would be an opportunity to use several resources, sets, levels and rostra to create locations. Actors' locations could vary frequently and move to create an atmosphere of excitement and vitality. There may be many actors and a chorus coordinating and making effective use of the space in one scene of the production. Remember, when discussing space, you will need to refer to the equipment in the space and characters' locations.



MOOD AND ATMOSPHERE:

Many theatrical resources can create mood and atmosphere in a production. But whilst referring to the designer's role, you could discuss the lighting, sound, costumes and set designer's work. However, one of these may have made more of an impression on you than the others. So, choose the show carefully, and initially, discuss the drama's style and context, e.g. Musical, Theatre Show in Education, production of Shakespeare's work, perhaps. Try to describe a scene (or scenes) that was/were full of tension and built tension amongst the audience, e.g. slowly increasing sound, the light fading or changing colour, the actor adding a piece of costume or using props in a symbolic way. A series of images on screen or a film might add to the mood. Theatre designers have so many possibilities to create mood and atmosphere.