



Department  
for Education

# **Drama and theatre**

**AS and A level subject content**

**February 2017**

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# The content for drama and theatre AS and A level

## Introduction

1. AS and A level subject content set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all AS and A level specifications in a given subject.
2. They provide the framework within which the awarding organisation creates the detail of the specification.

## Aims and objectives

3. AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre must offer a broad, coherent and rigorous course of study. They should inspire creativity in students. They should provide opportunities for students to make and understand drama, recognising it as a practical art form in which ideas and meaning are communicated to an audience through choices of form, style and convention. They should prepare students to make informed decisions about further learning and progression opportunities, including to higher education courses.
4. AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre should enable students to:
  - develop and apply an informed, analytical framework for making, performing, interpreting and understanding drama and theatre
  - understand the place of relevant theoretical research in informing the processes and practices involved in creating theatre and the place of practical exploration in informing theoretical knowledge of drama and theatre
  - develop an understanding and appreciation of how the social, cultural and historical contexts of performance texts have influenced the development of drama and theatre
  - understand the practices used in twenty-first century theatre making
  - experience a range of opportunities to create theatre, both published text-based and devised work
  - participate as a theatre maker<sup>1</sup> and as an audience member in live theatre

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as a person undertaking one or more of the following roles: Designer; lighting, sound, set (which can include props), costume (which can include hair, make-up and masks) and puppets; Performer; Director

- understand and experience the collaborative relationship between various roles within theatre
- develop and demonstrate a range of theatre making skills
- develop the creativity and independence to become effective theatre makers
- adopt safe working practices as a theatre maker
- analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others<sup>2</sup>

## Subject content

5. AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre should build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established at key stage 4 and in GCSE qualifications.

6. The content of AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre must reflect the aims and allow students the opportunity to develop and demonstrate an analytical framework informed by the knowledge, skills and understanding specified in paragraphs 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

7. AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre must require students to demonstrate a practical understanding of:

- at AS a minimum of one complete and substantial performance text<sup>3</sup> and a minimum of two key extracts<sup>4</sup> from two different texts, placed in the context of the whole text. The text and extracts must represent a range of social, historical and cultural contexts, and must have been professionally commissioned or professionally produced.
- at A level a minimum of two complete and substantial performance texts and a minimum of three key extracts from three different texts placed in the context of the whole text. The texts and extracts must represent a range of social, historical and cultural contexts, and must have been professionally commissioned or professionally produced.
- the work and methodologies of, at AS, one, and at A level, two, influential theatre practitioners (individuals or companies), including the:
  - historical, social and cultural context
  - theatrical purpose and practice

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<sup>2</sup> May include their own, their peers, amateur and/or professional works

<sup>3</sup> A performance text is one that has been written specifically for theatrical performance

<sup>4</sup> A key extract is a scene or moment that is significant to the text as a whole

- artistic intentions
- innovative nature of their approach
- working methods
- theatrical style and use of conventions
- collaboration with/influence on other practitioners

8. Specifications in drama and theatre must require students to participate in:

- at AS a minimum of one performance from a text, which has been studied as part of the course
- at A level a minimum of two performances, one devised and one from a performance text which has been studied as part of the course

9. At A level, specifications must allow students to demonstrate greater depth of study than the AS and to apply an understanding of:

- the connections between theory and practice in a range of periods, theatrical styles, social, historical and cultural contexts
- how relevant research, independent thought and analysis of live theatre<sup>5</sup> informs decision making in their own practical work
- the ways in which theatre makers collaborate to create theatre

10. Specifications must require students to experience live performance, where they are a member of the audience in the same performance space as the performers. This may be a professional or amateur, but not a peer, performance.

## **Knowledge and understanding**

11. AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre must require students to know and understand, using relevant subject specific terminology:

- the theatrical processes and practices involved in interpreting and performing theatre
- how conventions, forms and techniques are used in drama and live theatre to create meaning, including the:

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<sup>5</sup> Live theatre can include amateur or professional performances

- use of performance space and spatial relationships on stage
- relationships between performers and audience
- design of set, costume, makeup, lighting, sound and props
- performer's vocal and physical interpretation of character
- how creative and artistic choices influence how meaning is communicated to an audience
- how performance texts are constructed to be performed, conveying meaning through:
  - structure
  - language
  - stage directions
  - character construction
  - the style of text
- how performance texts are informed by their social, cultural and historical contexts, and are interpreted and performed for an audience

## Skills

12. Drawing on the knowledge and understanding in paragraph 11, AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre must require students to acquire, develop and apply skills in:

- using the working methodologies of, at AS, one, or at A level, two, influential practitioners (individuals or companies) in their own work
- using theatrical techniques to create meaning in a live theatre context as theatre makers<sup>6</sup> through:
  - research and development of ideas
  - interpretation of texts
  - devising
  - rehearsing
  - realisation
- realising artistic intention as a theatre maker, through:

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<sup>6</sup> Defined as a person undertaking one or more of the following roles: Designer, Performer, Director

- at AS, interpretation of performance texts
- at A level, interpretation of performance texts and the creation of devised work
- creativity and coherence when communicating meaning to an audience
- refinement and amendment of work in progress
- applying research to inform practical work to achieve clear dramatic and theatrical intentions
- analysing and evaluating the process of creating their own live theatre and the effectiveness of the outcome
- at AS, interpreting and evaluating live theatre<sup>7</sup> performance by others<sup>8</sup>
- at A level, interpreting, analysing and evaluating live theatre<sup>9</sup> performance by others<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of the analysis and evaluation of live performance in the assessment, live performance can include recordings or streams of live performance

<sup>8</sup> Amateur or professional performances

<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of the analysis and evaluation of live performance in the assessment, live performance can include recordings or streams of live performance

<sup>10</sup> Amateur or professional performances



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