

# Drama 2019 v1.1

## Unit 2 high-level annotated sample response

August 2018

### Examination — extended response

This sample has been compiled by the QCAA to assist and support teachers to match evidence in student responses to the characteristics described in the assessment objectives.

### Assessment objectives

This assessment instrument is used to determine student achievement in the following objectives:

1. demonstrate an understanding of the elements of drama and skills of critiquing
2. apply written literacy skills using relevant drama terminology and language conventions to communicate ideas and meaning
4. analyse how the elements of drama and conventions are used to create dramatic action and meaning
7. evaluate and justify the use of elements of drama and conventions to communicate dramatic meaning
8. synthesise and argue a position in response to recorded live dramatic action and meaning.

**Note:** Objectives 3, 5, and 6 are not assessed in this instrument.

# Task

## Question:

How does the manipulation of the elements of time, place, mood and symbol communicate the dramatic action and meaning of a young boy's journey into war?

## Sample response

### This is a high-level response because:

The response demonstrates an understanding of elements of drama making clear the interconnected nature of dramatic action and dramatic meaning focusing on the elements of time, place, mood and symbol. The application of written literacy skills through articulated ideas and controlled structure enhance communication of meaning about the dramatic languages within the given purpose, context and text. Sentences use appropriate spelling, punctuation and grammar to articulate clear and logical development of ideas that clarify the dramatic action and meaning in the text. The analysis of dramatic action by deconstructing and distinguishing choices made in terms of time, place, mood and symbol communicates dramatic meaning about Bertie's journey through the two scenes. The evaluation and justification uses discerning examples that reveal the interrelationship between purpose, context and meaning in relation to a young boy's journey into war. The synthesis of ideas argues a position that reveals well-reasoned relationships between purpose, context and dramatic languages to communicate dramatic action and meaning of a

The two episodes of *Black Diggers* followed the personal story of a young Aboriginal boy, Bertie, who desperate to join the fight, enlisted and then experienced the true horror of World War 1. The first scene took place on the mission where Bertie, only 15, implored his mother to provide proof that he was of age to enlist in the war. The second scene depicted a frightened Bertie in the trenches writing a pleading letter home to his mother for proof that he was underage so that he may escape the hell he has found himself in. The director, Wesley Enoch created scenes that manipulate time, place, symbol and mood sensitively and effectively to communicate dramatic action and meaning about Bertie's life story.

Both scenes took place in a basic charcoal grey set which incorporated a black box with a central low rostrum, a few set pieces — a lit drum, trestles, ammunition boxes, chairs, assorted painting materials — and white-washed walls with ochre-like paint. The walls depicted the dates and names of people and places from World War 1. These visual references symbolically reinforced the time and place of the play, depicting a metaphoric space rather than a literal one. The flexibility of the set allowed changes in time and place to be easily established through character, costume and dialogue. The simplistic design created a cultural poignancy for viewers; alerting the audience to the juxtaposition of white against black — a contrast both literal and abstract. In the first scene, the minimalist set combined with basic household props to transform into a humble mission home in 1917. This allowed the audience to focus on the interaction between characters — son, mother and grandfather. In the second scene, the wall became less visible beyond the spotlight as the young, scared soldier attempted to distance himself physically in the set and symbolically from the horror surrounding him.

This simple set design also allowed the director to exploit a diversity of symbols, further layering the dramatic meaning of the two scenes. In addition to the whitewashed walls a barrel on stage contains a constantly burning fire. This symbolised the eternal flame of the ANZACs and was a consistent reminder to the audience to remember. The humble housing of the flame inside a 44-gallon drum, rather than an elaborate shrine, provoked the audience to reflect on the constant persistence of indigenous peoples in the face of adversity. It also reinforced a lack of cultural and civil acknowledgement of the role of Indigenous soldiers during war-time. Powerful dialogue was used throughout the scenes as symbols to establish time and place and set mood. References to 'skinned rabbits on the fence' who looked on but were not part of the European world and a grandfather scoffing at a young man who wants to fight for a country that was seeking to isolate their culture highlighted the racial division in the country. This is ironically foretold in the first scene as Bertie's mother and grandfather lament that Bertie may go to war but the world will not change when he returns and that cultural discrimination in the wider Australian society will remain.

In partnership with set design, the lighting intensified the mood. The use of warm, yellow lighting in the first scene created a softer atmosphere of home. Later the harsh, blue spotlight on a frightened Bertie writing a letter in the field hospital enhanced his dire circumstances. The spotlight isolated him yet drew the audience into his plight. The combination of lighting, set design and lighting

young boy's journey into war.

effectively crafted contrasting moods to match the time and place in which the dramatic action occurred.

Mood was enhanced by the actors' skilful manipulation of voice and movement in realistic style. The audience was drawn into the tension of relationships expertly realised between the different characters as the dramatic action moves across time and place. The emotional struggle between the mother and her son wanting different outcomes communicated an intense mood – one of a battle of wills between the generations. Even though the actor playing Bertie's mother was male the characterisation was believable through the use of a softened vocal tone and raised pitch, without ever yielding to caricature. Her dialogue and sorrowful eyes accompanied by simple maternal gestures of folding blankets and touching Bertie's face created a strong impression of a conflicted mother. Her handling of her son with maternal authority and care while confronting him about enlisting created a sincere sense of potential loss. Bertie spoke with a high, breathy quality projecting a mood of optimism and adventure through his wide-eyed, energetic and positive dialogue — a stark contrast to the cynical interjections of both mother and granddad. The scene built a mood of sombre reflection for the audience which continued as they watched the second scene. In this place of war Bertie and his mother symbolised home far away and her premonition of loss resonated. Now faced with the reality of war in a place far removed from home, Bertie communicated his desolation through a hunched posture and hesitant speech. No longer naive he was alone and vulnerable as he struggled to force his words out. The contrasting settings of the two scenes helped build dramatic tension as the audience witnessed the circumstances for Bertie's change. Where the first scene unfolded in a setting with strong association with family and country, the second scene contrasted with Bertie's loss of land and innocence.

This poignant, powerful piece showed skilful manipulation of time, place and symbol to create mood and dramatic meaning revealing a glimpse of Australia at war but also an Australia dealing with issues of culture and belonging. The performance elicited responses of pathos and empathy, through the time jumps across Bertie's life as he moves from home/country to the war. Alongside the enthusiasm of a young boy caught up in national fervour to serve Australia Bertie became a symbolic beacon of the plight of Indigenous Australians and the institutional lack of recognition of indigenous soldiers during the war years.