

Q&A

with Deborah Lim, student and Katrina Hasthorpe, teacher
Brisbane State High School

Drama, Internal assessment 3: Project — practice-led project

Deborah Lim, student

Q: What did you enjoy most about Drama?

A: My favourite part of Drama was my class (especially my teacher). Despite the challenges of 2020, I always felt encouraged, safe and ready for the tasks ahead. My teacher was my greatest mentor, both honest and kind. She pushed and extended me to create some of the best and most fulfilling work during my senior years.

Q: How did you prepare for this assessment task?

A: For the pitch, I really took time to formulate my idea by writing a script. Then I tried to bring my script to life (even if it was just parts of it) to see how effective it really looked on stage. It was really exciting and helpful to see how my classmates responded to the ideas. I am also so grateful to my classmates for taking time to commit to weird movement pieces for me. For the performance part, we chose my friend's script, so I mainly helped to refine and confirm the staging. I made sure to fully break down the script to understand my specific role throughout the play to ensure I performed honestly and honourable to my friend's work. It was a really beautiful piece about feminism, and while some parts may have been abstract (because it was a transformation of a Greek tragedy), the theme was still very clear and evoked an emotional and powerful response from audiences.

Q: How did your teacher prepare you for this assessment?

A: For the pitch, my teacher took time to explain Greek tragedies and Brechtian techniques. She provided scaffolding ideas for formulating our ideas to link to drama elements and techniques, and also encouraged us to experiment with ideas. For the second part, she taught us different exercises to incorporate into our performances, facilitated peer feedback and gave her own, and she also checked in with us at the end of each lesson to make sure we were tracking well.

Q: What made you choose the topic or method of presentation?

A: For the pitch, I was really inspired by the two sisters in the Greek tragedy Antigone, and just saw an opportunity to create something that would bring awareness to the current issue of mental illness. I was also wanting to push myself to incorporate different disciplines of art, i.e. dance/physical theatre, to extend myself as an artist. For my group performance, the main creative control was with my friend who wrote the script; however, she welcomed our feedback and suggestions. The main idea was already strong, so through discussion, we decided how to present the play in the most appropriate and accessible way possible.

Q: What is most important to you when you are preparing a response to an assessment task?

A: When preparing a response to a task, it is so important for teachers to break down and explain the task sheet. It can be a rather confusing and ambiguous document to students, but my teacher really helped us to understand what examiners were looking for. It was extremely important to me to be able to hit each part of the ISMG explicitly and to a very high level so that examiners did not have to search to give me marks; they knew exactly what I was trying to do, and that I could do it well. My pitch may not have been the most poetic piece of writing, but it highlighted key ideas very clearly and within the time limit to ensure high results.

Q: What are your thoughts about this assessment and the approach you took when responding to the task?

A: I am extremely proud of the cohesion and clear storyline of the performance with my group. It was seamless, and every part flowed really well, from blocking to acting to the general dynamics of the performance. I am proud of my team for working hard, committing to the team and pouring every part of ourselves into it. Since the storyline and script were already solid from the start, we did not have many challenges, and if there was conflict, we just had a civil discussion and learnt to compromise.

Q: How will you use what you have learnt in this subject?

A: As I am studying Drama and Education at university right now, I am applying not just the drama techniques to my performance, but also the way my teacher taught us exercises and theory to my own pedagogy. I am taking time to deconstruct criteria sheets and recalling strategies from my teacher in the hope that I can be as supportive and inspiring as she was. Furthermore, Drama taught me a lot about experimentation and not being afraid of embarrassment, but also being respectful to yourself and others. This class has given me a lot of confidence and tools I can't wait to use in future classrooms.

Katrina Hasthorpe, teacher

Q: What was the purpose of this assessment and what key decisions were made in the design of the task?

A: To allow the students to engage deeply with a Greek text and transform the play into a contemporary performance that reflects their own political and social ideologies.

Q: How did your teaching and the student learning experiences prepare the students to complete this assessment?

A: The students engaged with a range of examples of contemporary transformations of classic texts through photos, videos, scripts and a theatre visit. We explored practical examples of contemporary conventions in a range of contexts, including staging mini 'Challenge' pieces of theatre around the school. We were fortunate to see Queensland Theatre's 'Antigone' in 2019, which was instrumental in allowing the students to engage with the text and see it in a contemporary production. As a class, we rescripted and devised a modern transformation of a poem from 'Antigone' that included all of the contemporary conventions, with the purpose to challenge the concept of War. We performed it for a Junior Drama class and surveyed them for their reactions and interpretations, which then informed the students' creation of their own work.

Q: How does this assessment reflect the unique characteristics of your school and your students?

A: The students were invited to create a performance for our annual 'Create Festival', a cherished celebration of learning in the Arts at Brisbane State High School. The students were excited to design a non-traditional piece of theatre for this specific purpose and context, as devising and performing work for 'Create Festival' is a highlight of the Brisbane State High School Arts experience.