**Assessment Task for Speaking**

**Topic: Value of drama**

This assessment task focuses on developing senior secondary students’ speaking skills.

This set of materials consists of Question Paper and Suggested Answers.

**Speaking Task: Value of Drama**

**Situation**:

You are a member of the school drama club. Recently, the following commentary which appeared on your school newsletter has come to your attention:

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| --- |
| My English teacher has asked that all students in the class give a group drama performance towards the end of the school term. Speaking personally, the theatrical activities and technical aspects of staging a drama production only appeal to those who are more expressive and keen on acting as well as public performance. I do not see the benefits of engaging in drama activities at all. They are just irrelevant to my everyday learning and are unlikely to help me learn better. |

**Part A Group Interaction**

In response to the views presented in the school newsletter, you and other club members are preparing a short talk to encourage your schoolmates to take part in drama activities while addressing the concerns over the value of drama in student learning.

You may want to talk about:

* the different advantages of engaging in drama activities
* what order you would put the various advantages in
* how to explain and elaborate the advantages to schoolmates during the talk
* anything else you think is important

**Part B Individual Response**

After the talk, you and the other club members are asked by the teacher advisor to produce a short campus TV programme which features your experiences in drama performances, with a view to enhancing student interest in your club activities. To rehearse for the filming, the teacher will ask each of you a question so that you can practise how to present ideas clearly and effectively.

1. What sort of plays do you think are most suitable for performance in schools?
2. What experience have you had of watching and/or taking part in plays?
3. Would you like to act in a play or are there other theatre jobs (such as stage management, the

costume department and lighting) you would prefer?

1. What sort of stage shows do you like best?

**END OF QUESTION PAPER**

**Suggested Ideas for Group Interaction and Individual Response**

**Part A Group Discussion**

* the different advantages of engaging in drama activities

- English language speaking skills: pronunciation, sentence stress and intonation, clear speaking, greater fluency, improved vocabulary, script reading and writing

- Confidence: speaking on stage, learning to use gestures and body language, working in a big team

- Cooperation: team work, discussing problems and solutions, timing, helping fellow performers in trouble with lines or actions, covering mistakes

- Great fun: new friends, interesting stories, make-up, costumes, pretending to be other people

- Expressing emotions: body language, awareness of feelings, tactful ways of showing feelings and reading other people’s behaviour and facial expressions

- Art and culture: history of drama, types of drama, famous playwrights

* what order you would put the various advantages in

Students can compare their own lists, offer reasons, ask questions about other people’s feelings and recall events which particularly affected them.

* how to explain and elaborate the advantages to schoolmates during the talk
* Some short role plays
* Different members of the group representing different benefits
* A before-and after-format, i.e. ‘Before the course I was so shy I couldn’t speak to a stranger, but now here I am on the stage telling you about my experience.’
* Slide show
* Humour
* anything else you think is important
* Learning some technical skill such as lighting engineering, costume design and making, set creation, or other
* Play-writing
* The pride of a successful performance [applause and praise]
* Dealing with stage nerves

**Part B Individual Response**

* + - 1. What sort of plays do you think are most suitable for performance in schools?

*Well, I don’t think they should be too long. The audience isn’t really used to much drama. They enjoy some humour and references to school life always get a good response. I think plays we have written ourselves are good – we can take ideas from famous plays but we need to adapt them to modern Hong Kong if we want our schoolmates to enjoy our acting. There are advantages to plays set in the present too as we don’t need to spend a lot of time or even money on costumes. On some occasions plays with moral messages are good. Schools are about education and plays can raise issues about friendship, dating, honesty, coping with examinations, learning from our mistakes and getting on well with our families. Retellings of famous stories work well too. We did a Cinderella. Younger students might not be able to follow a new story in English but if they already know the outlines of the plot it helps them. Of course, if a school has a tradition of drama, it can do something grander like a musical but that takes a really big effort.*

* + - 1. What experience have you had of watching and/or taking part in plays?

*I have been a member of our school drama club for three years. During that time I have seen a few plays. Once a year an outside group comes and gives us a performance from which I can learn a lot. Once I went with a group of club mates to see the musical “West Side Story” in the Coliseum. That was done by a professional group and was very impressive. And of course I see our own plays. For one of them I worked as a stage hand. It was hard work getting all the scenery and props right for each scene, but I enjoyed it and made some new friends from other classes. That got me used to being on stage so the next year I took part in a play about some criminals pretending to be ghosts so everyone would run away. I was one of the ghosts. I didn’t have to speak but make strange scary noises. Everyone teased me about it, but it was fun and made me feel special as the whole school knew me as the white-faced phantom.*

* + - 1. Would you like to act in a play or are there other theatre jobs (such as stage management, the costume department and lighting) you would prefer?

*It must be nice to have a big part in a play, talk to the other actors about how to play it and go to the front of the stage at the end to bow and get all the applause. But of course it’s also a lot of hard work. I don’t think I could learn all those lines and remember all those movements and cues. If I made one mistake, I’d probably be too upset to go on. I don’t think I am the right sort of person to take big parts in plays and being an extra in a crowd scene isn’t very interesting. But luckily I’m a techie and am good at playing round with computers so I can participate in all sorts of activities. When we have song contests, although I am really unmusical, I’m there backstage making sure the audio-visual parts of the performances are on time and good. So I’d be happy to help with a play. I could programme the lights and sound effects for the director. Virtual scenery is also a lot less trouble than moving wooden sets around. I hope I can study computers at university and one day work in the computer graphics field.*

* + - 1. What sort of stage show do you like best?

*Definitely musicals - I am a fan of all of them. I’ve seen the films of the famous ones many times and if one comes to the Hong Kong stage I beg my parents to take me. There’s something magical about putting together a good plot, good acting, lovely costumes and great music. The result is so emotional. I’m not sure which my favourite is – “Evita” makes me cry. “Cats” is so cute and “Memory” is such a great song. We have watched “Oliver” in English and I was singing Food, food, glorious food to myself for days after. Perhaps though, “Phantom of the Opera” is my all-time favourite. The story is so tragic. The Phantom loves Christine so much and is so jealous, but he knows really you cannot hurt people you love and still say you love them. He has to let her go. And the opera house is so ghostly and the music so powerful.*

**END OF SUGGESTED ANSWERS**