



How to Get Ahead in Drama A-Level



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Introduction

Well done for choosing Drama at A-Level. You will have a fantastic time. Before we start the course in September, you will have had a lot of time away from structured learning. So, let's make sure that you are ready and prepared by examining the details and structure of the A-Level course.



Theatre Styles

You will have to work in at least **5 different theatre styles** or **practitioners** for your practical pieces, so let's get watching and learning about them. You have started with **Brecht** and **Naturalism** at GCSE, but we need to go deeper and know a lot more than these two. One of the tasks in this will be lots and lots of YouTube watching and looking at how the styles of different practitioners are formed. Coming back to this later...

Set Texts

You have **three set texts** to get your head around. They are all brilliant and reflective of different styles, themes, cultures and periods of time.

Set text 1: Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time



Set text 2: Cat on Hot Tin Roof



Set text 3: Accidental Death of an Anarchist



You will need to know all about the **styles** they were written in, the **social and cultural backgrounds**, the **characters** and **how to perform them**. You will get the chance to stage the plays using **set and props, lighting and sound and costume and hair and make-up**.

You must be able to use **live theatre** you have seen to **inspire** your answers, so we need to see as much theatre as we can! That means on-line at the moment obviously!

So, let's get started and begin your journey!

Ordering Texts

You can get these three texts ordered on Amazon. Please ensure you get the **right copies**, as you all need to have the same version from the exam board:

- Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Tennessee Williams. **Penguin**
ISBN: 978-0-141-19028-0
- Accidental Death of an Anarchist. Dario Fo. **Methuen.**
ISBN: 978-0-413-15610-5
- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.
Mark Haddon adapted by Simon Stephens. **Bloomsbury.**
ISBN: 978-1-4081-7335-0

Once your copies have arrived, please **read them**.

Time to get Watching!

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof Productions and Tasks

Have a look at the **table on page 8** make **notes** on how the productions mentioned below have been performed by **noting down specific examples** of **set, props, costume, hair and make-up, lighting and sound** for all productions of **Cat on a Hot Tin Roof**.

Task 1 **Compulsory Task**

For **Cat on a Hot Tin Roof**, you'll start loving it if you watch the **Hollywood film**. Its great! But be aware while the story and characters are the same it is a very **Hollywoodized version** of what **Tennessee Williams** wanted. It skirts around some of the more controversial issues. So, enjoy it, but that's not the full story at all.

1958 Hollywood Version. Directed by Richard Brooks.

Staring:

Elizabeth Taylor as Maggie

Paul Newman as Brick

Burl Ives as Harvey 'Big Daddy'

Judith Anderson as Ida 'Big Mama'

You can buy or rent the **Hollywood version** on **YouTube** or buy it on **Amazon**. The link for the Amazon is below:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/s?k=cat+on+a+hot+tin+roof+dvd&cr id=H9MQ6CWHB86T&sprefix=cat+on%2Caps%2C171&ref=nb_s b ss i 4 6

Task 2: **Compulsory Task**

Using the **table below on page 8** add in your notes, as previously stated on the top of **page 5** for this production (see page 5 more details).

Task 3: **Compulsory Task**

From your independent research (there's a lot of independence at A-Level) list the themes of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. You will see how the **Hollywood film** makes them all very pretty. **Paul Newman** for example, looks very pretty for a **raging alcoholic** and **Elizabeth Taylor** is refined for a woman who has been, “**disgustingly poor all her life.**” But it's a lovely film.

Task 4: **Compulsory Task**

The **BEST** version of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* to watch is the brilliant **National Theatre** version that was **directed** by **Benedict Andrews, 2017**. You can watch this and lots of other amazing productions for **free online** as we have an account. Please watch this version.

Search the URL <https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com> or search **Drama Online**. The Login details are:

Username: Poyntonstudents (Capital P and one word)

Password: Pa55word (Capital P and 55 instead of ss)

Task 5: Compulsory Task

Using the **table below on page 8** add in your notes, as previously stated on the top of **page 5** for this production (see page 5 for more details).

Task 6: Compulsory Task

Here is a link to some performances on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=cat+on+a+hot+tin+roof

Watch as many of the videos as you can from this YouTube link and add to your notes on the table on Page 8. Please take note of the date of production, director and company.

Task 7: Compulsory Task

Go onto Google Images and look up Productions of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and make a mood board or powerpoint with all the different versions of it. Be very aware of James Dacre's version of it at the Royal Exchange in Manchester

Director, production company and date	Labelled drawings of how they used set	Some examples of costume, hair and make-up	Some examples of use of sound	Some examples of use of light

Accidental Death of an Anarchist Productions and Tasks

Task 8: Compulsory Task

Watch this 7-minute clip from **Sydney Theatre Company, 2009** who have put a production of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, make notes on the following: **note down specific examples of set, props, costume, hair and make-up, lighting and sound.**

Link for the 7-minute clip:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=story+of+accidental+death+of+an+anarchist&docid=608030758682099715&mid=17AB639744F7A8C9600717AB639744F7A8C96007&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

Some Context...

This play is written by **Dario Fo** about a **true story** of a railway worker who was labelled an “**anarchist**” by the **fascist government** and got **arrested** by the police and **thrown out of the window** of their offices. The “**ACCIDENTAL**” death of an Anarchist” **Not an accident at all of course** - and the play uses **comedy and farce and slapstick and funny physical scenes** based on the style of theatre called **Commedia del’Arte** to get the police in the play to confess.

Task 9: Compulsory Task

Complete the following tasks:

- 1. Read about the plot and the real-life story the play is based on and make notes in the space below .**
- 2. Read about the playwright Dario Fo and his wife Franca Rama and make notes in the space below**

Write your notes - at least a page- here: (pages 10-11)

(Continued space for your notes on the tasks on Page 11)

Task 10: **Compulsory Task**

Watch the items listed below to understand the style that **Accidental Death of an Anarchist** needs to be performed in and make notes:

To understand the style of **Commedia del'Arte** and the concept of **farce** you can see it in a lot of **British comedy**.

1. From the 1970's search online and watch some of, **Some Mothers Do 'Ave Em'** to see and begin to understand some **physical farcical comedy**.



2. From the 1980s **Allo Allo** – a **comedy sitcom** set in the Second World War. Look for the **stock characters** and the extreme **silly physical comedy**. Box sets of these are available. This will help you understand elements of **Epic theatre**, you will see arguably quite **offensive comedy**, **edgy**, **very irreverent stereotyping of national identities** – mainly British German and French and **lamprooning (mocking)** those in charge who are **corrupt** which is the **intention behind Dario Fo's work**.



Task 11: Compulsory Task

Notice the episodes of Allo Allo always begin with an **address to the camera** to “**explain**” what has happened.

Once you have watched a few – **note down what else you notice about the characters and style of comedy.**

Make notes on the following in the space below:

The extreme way the characters are created

The Acting style they are using

The relationship with the audience/camera

Can you see how the seriousness of World War 1 in Blackadder 4 (see next page) and World War 2 in Allo Allo is made into 'satirical' comedy?

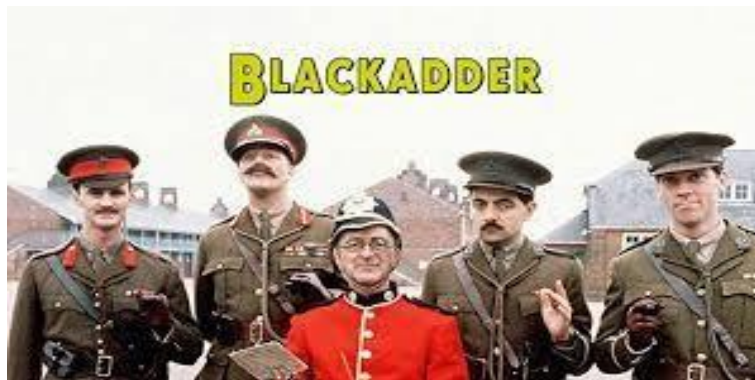
Check you know what 'satirical' means.

(Can you make some notes here on how that happens?)

Task 12: **Compulsory Task**

How do both Allo Allo and BlackAdder make fun of those of charge?

Write a few lines here.



Task 13: **Compulsory Task**

Next, look at some of the following TV shows and make notes for the same criteria on pages 13-14:

- Upstart Crow - By Ben Elton who wrote Blackadder
- Miranda - See the relationship with the audience
- Keeping up Appearances - The horrible bringing down of pompous characters
- The Inbetweeners - Only if the episodes classed suitable for your ages.
- Fawlty Towers - A comedy of characters and people looking foolish
- Up Pompeii - Back to the 70's this one.
- Play that Goes Wrong! By Mischief Theatre, it's so funny. Link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOWO4gq-whg>

Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time Productions and Tasks



Task 14: Compulsory Task

Read the play on your own or in a group with others –It’s an easy play to read. It is all written from Christopher Boone’s point of view. He is a 15-year-old boy who is a very high functioning boy who has Autism and Asperger’s syndrome. Christopher who is a genius at maths, discovers his next-door neighbour’s dog has been killed. He starts detecting to try and find out who did it but finds out a whole load more than he bargained for. Read it and enjoy it. It is also a book by Mark Haddon.

There are loads of resources online and that you can buy to help you understand the themes and the characters, but for now, just read it and enjoy it.

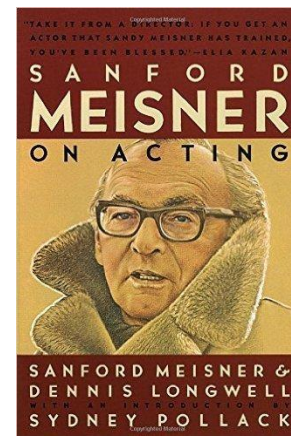
Theatre styles



Theatre Styles

We need to be **aware and be able to use at least 5 to a high level**. Below is a list of **theatre companies and practitioners** you should be looking at **making notes about**. You already have worked on **Brecht** and **Naturalism**, but here are some more and some links to see examples of different styles of work.

You will at some time work in the style of **Naturalism** with practitioners and directors like: **Stanislavski, Meisner and Uta Hagen**.



Task 15: Compulsory Task

Start off with **filling in the table on the next page**. The more **you do the better**, but this will get you thinking a little bit. You'll need a bit of independent research here.

Definition of Theatrical Naturalism	Example of a Stanislavski acting and rehearsal technique	Example of a Meisner technique	Example of a technique by Uta Hagen

Frantic Assembly

Task 16: **Compulsory Task**

Research the **Theatre Company Frantic Assembly** and the **techniques they use**. They create lots of **expressive work physically**. Use the link below to look at some techniques they use and create some notes:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=frantic+assembly+techniques&ie=&oe=>



Task 17: **Compulsory Task**

Watch these two shows listed below on **Digital Theatre Plus**.
(Please note access to this is different from last year)

- **Love Song**
- **Things I know to be True**

The URL for the website is <https://edu.digitaltheatreplus.com>

Username: user.poyntonhs

Password: morning@7738

Task 18: **Compulsory Task**

- Here is a link to a range of Frantic Assembly techniques. Make notes on the techniques and what techniques you saw them use in the two productions on the page before on the Digital Theatre Plus website. Link to the techniques below:

<https://prezi.com/r4gtqpmt6w79/10-frantic-assembly-techniques/>

- Watch a range of these – they are all short and fill the table on page 20.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKd9ERhV5SI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PB-9LERsyY8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUqZPfGIX6U>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40t-bI6dYXs>

For the table, name the technique and give a brief description of how they have used it. There are loads to use from. Once you have done pick your favourite 4.

Frantic Assembly Technique	Description of how it's done/how they used it

Stephen Berkoff

Stephen Berkoff's Style

Notice: Exaggerated facial expressions, stylised mime, physical creation of characters that aren't there, stylised movement (slow motion/robotic) exaggerated facial expressions direct address, exaggerated vocal work, tableaux, mask, ensemble playing and minimalism.



Task 19: **Compulsory Task**

Watch this Berkoffian clip below and pay attention to the styles listed above:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6DUpCfICyM>

Then there are lots of examples on YouTube of pieces done for A-Level in the style of Berkoff. Watch a few and then see the style features listed above.

List here what clips you have watched:

-
-
-
-
-
-

Kill the Beast



Kill the Beast have a **fun style**, as you can tell from this picture.

Task 20: Compulsory Task

Watch both clips below to the end. Fill in the table on the next page about what you see from this clip, under the appropriate headings. Scene 2 is useful!

Link 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rssboxELoVoMake>

Link 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FE42tTgMfcU>

Here is Kill the Beast's Website:

<https://www.killthebeast.co.uk/kill-thebeast>

Element of Theatre	Describe what it's like
E.g., Staging	E.g., Locations done by a cartoony picture on a projection. Lots of colour. A few set pieces of set and props.
Choral work	
Song and rhythm and repetition	
Lighting and sound	
Style of movement	
Costumes/hair and make-up (This is a winner for a costume hair and makeup artist!)	
Vocal and physical actions	

1927

Another fun style is a company called 1927.



Task 21: Compulsory Task

Using the clips below watch how the action interacts with the animation and music and song. The acting is really stylised. A big influence of stylised mime.

Link 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6H8OOnmrDeY>

Link 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syCH3VZwbel>

Link 3: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lSEuAszJx8

Brecht

Task 22: Compulsory Task

And lastly, you'll need all your notes on Brecht. Here's a link to the brilliant **Splendid Theatre Company** for you to remind

yourselves. Use the link to click on the past productions and watch some trailers.

https://splendidproductions.co.uk/past_productions/

How many **Brecht techniques** can you remember from your Component 1?

List them all here. How many can you name? 5? 10? 15?

Task Completion Chart

<u>Task</u>	<u>Date of completion</u>
1 - Page 5	
2- Pages 5/6	
3 - Page 6	
4 - Page 6	
5 - Page 7	
6 - Page 7	
7 - Page 7	
8 - Page 9	
9 - Pages 10/11	
10 - Page 12	
11 - Pages 13/14	
12 - Pages 13/14/15	
13 - Pages 13/14/15	
14 - Page 16	
15 - Pages 17/18	
16 - Page 19	
17 - Page 19	
18 - Pages 20/21	
19 - Page 22	
20 - Pages 23/24	
21 - Page 25	

So, if you can do all this in the time, you will be off to a flying start with the brilliant 2 years of A-Level Drama.

Please e-mail any questions you may have to:

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