

World theatre traditions

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Theatre · HL

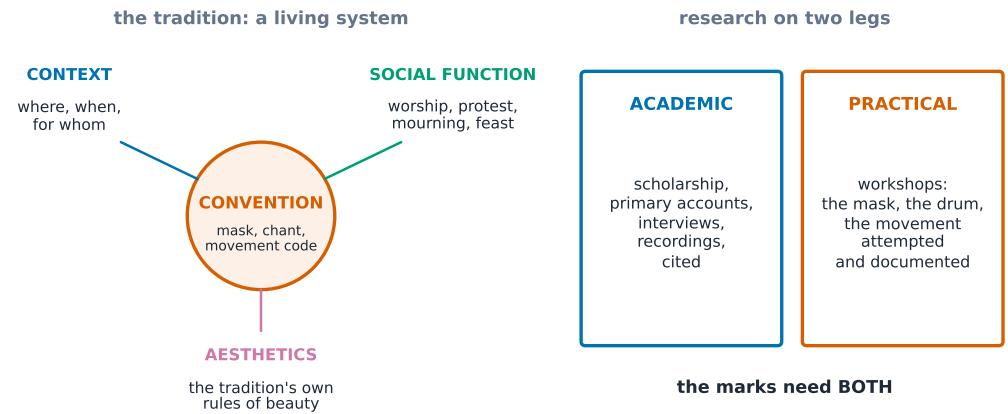
IB Diploma Programme Theatre HL (first assessment 2024; current guide). This topic equips the RESEARCH PRESENTATION – the externally assessed task (30% SL, 20% HL): plan, deliver and video-record an individual presentation of 15 minutes maximum, providing evidence of academic and practical research into an UNFAMILIAR world theatre tradition, with a list of all sources cited. The course’s intercultural spine, this task asks the student to research a tradition academically and physically: the convention learned in the body, not just reported. This handout teaches the research-and- presentation craft and kits the traditions most commonly chosen. All worked framings are original.

Must-know for the research presentation:

Family	Content
task	15-minute video; academic + practical evidence; sources list
tradition	performance convention in context: ritual, social function, aesthetics
method	embodied research: learn the convention, not about it
ethics	attribution, ownership, avoiding appropriation and stereotype
presentation	structure: hook, context, demonstration, analysis, reflection

Researching a tradition

A **world theatre tradition** is a living performance system: its **convention** (the distinctive performance practice: a masked form, a chant, a movement code, a staging custom), its **CONTEXT** (where, when, for whom, inside what ritual or celebration or entertainment), its **social function** (what the performance DOES in its community – worship, protest, mourning, feast), and its **AESTHETICS** (the rules of beauty and effectiveness the tradition itself holds). The research runs on two legs, and the marks require BOTH: **ACADEMIC** (scholarship, primary accounts, interviews, recordings – properly cited) and **PRACTICAL** (the student learns the convention in workshops: attempting the mask, the drum pattern, the movement – and documents the attempts). Knowledge resides in the body: a presentation that only describes is half the task.



Research the tradition as a system, on both legs: academic sources and practical workshops.

Research ethics : attribute living practitioners and sources; treat the tradition as its community’s property (what may be learned, what performed, what is closed); avoid the stereotype compile and the exotic montage – the tradition is a system, not a curiosity. The presentation says what the researcher could NOT learn and why: the honesty the top band rewards.

Worked example. A student researching a masked dance-drama tradition: academic leg (the scholarship on the mask’s meaning, an interview with a teacher-practitioner, festival recordings); embodied leg (workshop attempts at the posture and the walk, filmed – the first attempts failing is DATA: what the body must unlearn to wear the convention); presentation analysis (why the mask works only with the chant – the convention is a SYSTEM, and isolating one element breaks it, which the embodied failure demonstrates).

The presentation craft

The 15-minute **presentation** is structured, not streamed: **HOOK** (30 seconds of the convention itself – the mask enters before the explanation); **CONTEXT** (the tradition’s world: place, occasion, community, in two minutes); **DEMONSTRATION** (the embodied research shown: the workshop attempts, the learning curve); **ANALYSIS** (the convention unpacked as a system – what each element does, how the elements interlock, what the tradition’s own aesthetics value); **REFLECTION** (what the research taught about theatre itself – the transferable insight, and the limits owned: what could not be learned from outside the community). The video is continuous and unedited: rehearse to the clock, and let the demonstration carry the analysis – show, then say what the showing showed.

The tradition kits (chosen examples)

Four commonly chosen families, each with its anchor convention and its intercultural lesson. COMMUNAL RITUAL FORMS: performance embedded in ceremony – the convention is the community’s act, not a repertoire; the lesson: “theatre” and “ritual” are our boxes, not theirs. MASKED DANCE-DRAMA TRADITIONS (Asia): the mask as a spiritual technology – the performer becomes, not represents; the movement code trains years; the lesson: convention as accumulated body-knowledge. DANCE-THEATRE AND MOVEMENT CODES: codified gesture vocabularies where the hand’s angle carries meaning; the lesson: movement as a language with grammar, learnable only in the body. STREET AND PROTEST FORMS: performance as public claim – the audience is the street, the state is the context; the lesson: theatre’s function is political wherever it is made. The choice rule: a tradition the student can research BOTH ways – where practitioner contact or workshop access genuinely exists.

Checklist

- The task’s facts: 15-minute continuous video, academic AND practical evidence, sources list (task).
- The tradition researched as a system: convention, context, social function, aesthetics (tradition).
- The embodied leg: workshop attempts documented, failure as data (method).
- Ethics: attribution, ownership, limits owned (ethics).
- The presentation’s five moves: hook, context, demonstration, analysis, reflection – show, then say (presentation).
- The four kits’ anchor conventions and intercultural lessons (kits).

Boundary notes: the presentation is marked on research breadth and depth, practical exploration, presentation skill and reflection – the demonstration must carry the analysis. All worked framings are original; the traditions referenced are the standard canon of world theatre study.

Worked demonstration move. From the workshop: twenty seconds of the tradition’s core convention performed live – the audience meets the convention as its makers use it – and only then the analysis: what the convention carries that plain speech cannot. Show first, say second; the reverse is a lecture with photographs.