

Collaborative original theatre

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Theatre · HL

IB Diploma Programme Theatre HL (first assessment 2024; current guide). This topic equips the COLLABORATIVE CREATION of original theatre – the syllabus area (60 teaching hours) that culminates in the collaborative project assessment: an ensemble of theatre-makers formulates intentions, examines how intentions are realised in collaboration, and creates original performance work inspired by a starting point. This handout teaches the devising craft – from starting point through ensemble process to performance and evaluation. All worked examples are original.

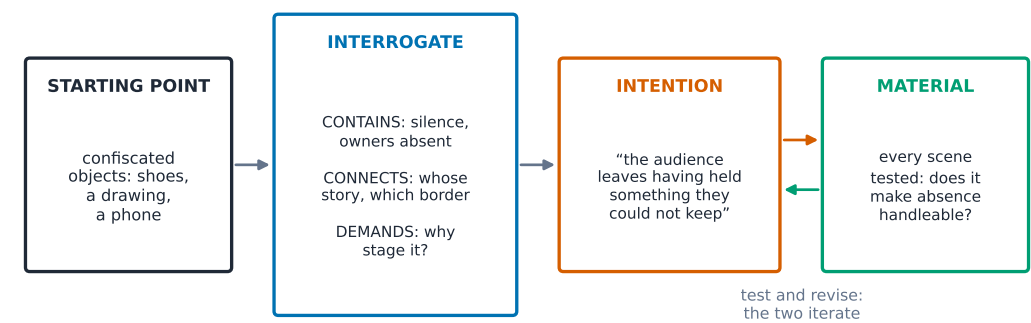
Must-know for collaborative creation:

Family	Content
starting point	image, text, object, question – the seed chosen and interrogated
intention	what the piece is FOR: the theatre-maker’s aim, stated and testable
devising	workshop methods: image theatre, improvisation, writing in the room
ensemble	roles, agreements, feedback: how collaboration is structured
evaluation	did the intention reach the audience? evidence, not vibes

Starting points and intentions

A **starting point** is the seed: a photograph, a news item, an object, a poem, a question, a memory – anything the ensemble agrees to interrogate. The craft is interrogation, not illustration: the starting point is asked what it **CONTAINS** (its facts, its tensions, its silences), what it **CONNECTS** to (whose story, which structures, which audience), and what it **DEMANDS** of theatre (why this must be staged, not essayed). From the interrogation comes the **intention** : what this piece is **FOR** – not a theme (“migration”) but a performative aim (“make the audience feel a border in their bodies”). The intention is written, visible in the rehearsal room, and revisited: every material choice is tested against it, and the intention may be **REVISED** by the process – the two iterate.

Worked example. Starting point: a pile of confiscated border-crossing objects (shoes, a child’s drawing, a phone). The interrogation: the objects are silent (their owners absent), the tension is presence-through-absence, the demand is that the audience handle what the owners cannot carry. Intention: “the audience leaves having held something they could not keep.” Every scene generated must be tested: does it make absence handleable?



Interrogate the starting point, write the intention, then test every scene against it; the intention can change too.

The devising process

Devising generates material in the room rather than interpreting a written text. The generating methods: **Image theatre** (ensembles build still images (sculpted bodies) and the images are re-sculpted against the intention; fast, wordless, exposes staging instantly); **IMPROVISATION** (structured play that generates scenes – with rules that keep the intention in the room: “every improvisation ends with an object left behind”); **WRITING IN THE ROOM** (monologues, lists, letters generated from the material, then edited by the ensemble); and **PHYSICAL/VOCAL COMPOSITION** (transferring found material into the body – a rhythm from the objects, a choral list, a repeated gesture). The material accumulates on the wall; the shaping phase selects and orders it against the intention, building the piece’s **SPINE** (its own through-line, topic 01’s read now applied to the ensemble’s own work).

Worked example, continued. Image theatre generates “the line at the fence”; improvisation generates the guard who cannot stop apologising; writing generates the owner’s letters read by strangers. Shaping orders them: the audience enters past the objects; the letters are given to them; the piece ends when every object has been held and put down.

Ensemble, performance and evaluation

The **ensemble** is structured collaboration, not a friendship: agreed **ROLES** (facilitator rotates; the scribe keeps the wall; the timekeeper protects the clock), working **AGREEMENTS** (how decisions happen, how disagreement is voiced, what is said at the end of each session), and **FEEDBACK** protocols (specific, behavioural, about the work not the person – “the third image repeated the first; cut or change”). The classic collaborative failures have names: the director-in-disguise (one member’s vi-

sion silently governing), the polite silence (agreement without scrutiny – the enemy of original work) and the workshop loop (generating endlessly, never shaping). The **performance** is the test: the audience either receives the intention or not. EVALUATION gathers evidence – what the audience DID (held, put down, kept talking at the door), what worked in performance against intention, what the process taught about collaboration itself – and owns what failed. The reflective weight the marks assign falls here: process and product are evaluated together.

Checklist

- Starting points interrogated (contains, connects, demands), never illustrated; the intention as a performative aim, written, tested, revised (intentions).
- The generating methods: image theatre, improvisation with rules, writing in the room, physical/vocal composition; material accumulated then shaped into the piece’s spine (devising).
- Ensemble structure: rotating roles, agreements, feedback protocols; the three named failures (ensemble).
- Performance as the test of intention; evaluation with audience evidence, process owned alongside product (evaluation).
- The worked border-objects piece: interrogation, intention, generated scenes and shaped order understood (worked).

Boundary notes: the collaborative project is marked on the making, the performance and the evaluation together – the ensemble’s reflection carries real weight. All worked examples are original.

Worked evaluation sentence. “The silences worked: three audience members leaned in at the second freeze, and one answered the direct question aloud – but the ending’s meaning went unlanded, asked after, unproven.” Evidence first, judgement second, limits named: the evaluation criterion pays for sentences like that, not for “we think it went well”.