Collaborative original theatre

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Theatre · SL

IB Diploma Programme Theatre SL (first assessment 2024; current guide). Collaboratively creating original theatre is shared by SL and HL: 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.

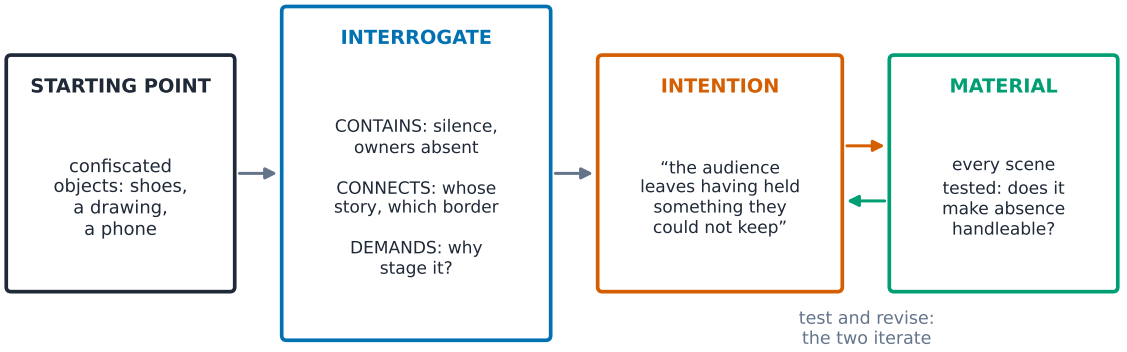
Must-know for collaborative creation:

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".