Course Companion

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Theatre · SL

Every topic handout in one volume

exercises.lol

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Staging play texts

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IB Diploma Programme Theatre SL (first assessment 2024; current guide). The production proposal is shared by SL and HL (30% at SL): choose a published play text not previously studied and formulate a vision for the design and theoretical staging of the ENTIRE play for an audience, presented as a proposal of at most 12 pages with written text not exceeding 4 000 words. This handout teaches reading a play as a THEATRE-MAKER: from text to vision to proposal. The worked examples use an imagined staging of a classic realist text, with all design decisions original.

Must-know for the production proposal:

Family	Content
reading	given circumstances, spine, action units; the world of the play
vision	the director's concept: one governing idea tying every choice
design	set, costume, lighting, sound, space – each serving the concept
audience	who watches, where, and how the staging positions them
proposal	the document: vision, moments, design, justification

Reading the play as a theatre-maker

A play text is not literature on legs: it is a **score** for performance. The theatre-maker's read asks what the play DEMANDS: the GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES (the facts the text fixes – time, place, relations), the **spine** (the single through-line of the protagonist's want), the ACTION UNITS (beats where want meets obstacle and changes), and the WORLD of the play (its rules, its atmosphere, what it costs to live there). Alongside the academic read runs the **embodied** read the guide insists on: standing the key relationships up, walking the space, testing the text aloud: knowledge that resides in the body, the course's founding principle. From the read comes the question the proposal answers: what is THIS production's play about – not the play in general, but this staging's argument, held in one sentence.

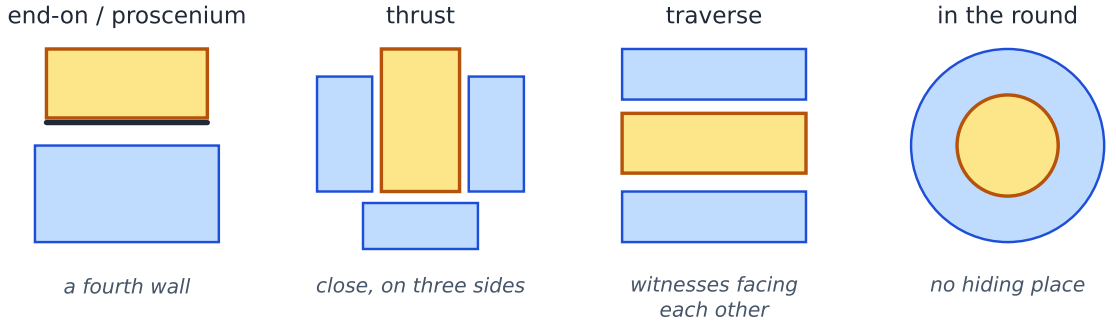
> **Worked example.** In a naturalist family drama the read finds: the given circumstance of a mortgaged house; the spine – the daughter's fight to leave; units that each strip her of an ally; a world where love is currency. One-sentence argument: "this staging shows a family eating its young to keep its house." Every design choice below answers to that sentence.

Vision, design and the audience

The **concept** is one governing idea that ties every choice: not a decorative theme ("loneliness") but a performance argument ("the room shrinks as each daughter leaves"). Test a concept by its yield: how it stages the opening, the turning point and

the ending – a concept that cannot stage the ending is a mood, not a concept. The design areas each serve it: the **set** (the room's shrinking is built – walls that track in per act); **Costume** (period held but fading – the family dresses in its own past); **Light** (naturalism narrowing to a lamp's circle – safety shrinking with the space); **Sound** (the house's own noises rising as people leave); **Space** (end-on and proscenium for the fourth wall, or a traverse for entrapment – the audience as witnesses who cannot intervene).

The **audience** is a design material: where they sit decides what they are (fourth-wall voyeurs, trapped traverse witnesses, promenade ghosts). The moment architecture carries the vision: choose THREE moments to plan in the proposal's detail – typically the opening image (which states the world in silence), the pivot (where the spine turns), and the final image (which lands the argument) – and let every other choice be inferred from them.



Where the audience sits decides what they are: four stage configurations

> **Worked example, continued.** The opening image: the family eats at a table filling the stage, walls wide. The pivot: the daughter stands; the lamp is the only light; the walls have halved the room. The final image: she is out; the parents face the table in a pool the size of a plate. The concept stages its sentence in three pictures, and the proposal's reader can SEE the production.

Writing the proposal

The document ($\leq$ 4 000 words, $\leq$ 12 pages of text and images) is judged on how the vision informs EVERY choice: structure it as (1) the play and its world, briefly – the reader knows the play; (2) the concept, stated in the one sentence and unpacked; (3) the three moments, each with its staging and design; (4) the design areas, each tied to the concept in a line; (5) the audience's position – literally and thematically. Justify by RETURNING to the concept: a choice unexplained reads as taste; a choice explained from the concept reads as direction. The images serve the text, never decorate it. The classic failures: the literature essay (analysis in direction's place), the mood board

(pictures, no argument), the concept drop (a sentence never cashed).

Checklist

- The theatre-maker's read: given circumstances, spine, units, the world – plus the embodied read (reading).
- The concept: one performance argument, not a theme; tested against opening, pivot and ending (vision).
- The design areas, each serving the concept and each named: set, costume, light, sound, space (design).
- The audience as material: position decides role – fourth wall, traverse, promenade (audience).
- The document's five-part structure; justification always returning to the concept; images serving text (proposal).
- The worked staging's sentence, three moments and shrinking room understood (worked).

Boundary notes: the proposal is marked on the vision's coherence and its informing of every choice - the examiner must be able to see the production from the page. All worked staging decisions are original.

Worked vision, one sentence. The staging's sentence – "the room shrinks as her choices narrow" – disciplines everything after it: the palette greys scene by scene, the door moves upstage, a chair leaves each act. A choice that serves the sentence stays; a choice that only decorates goes – and the proposal's justification column is exactly that test, choice by choice.

World theatre traditions

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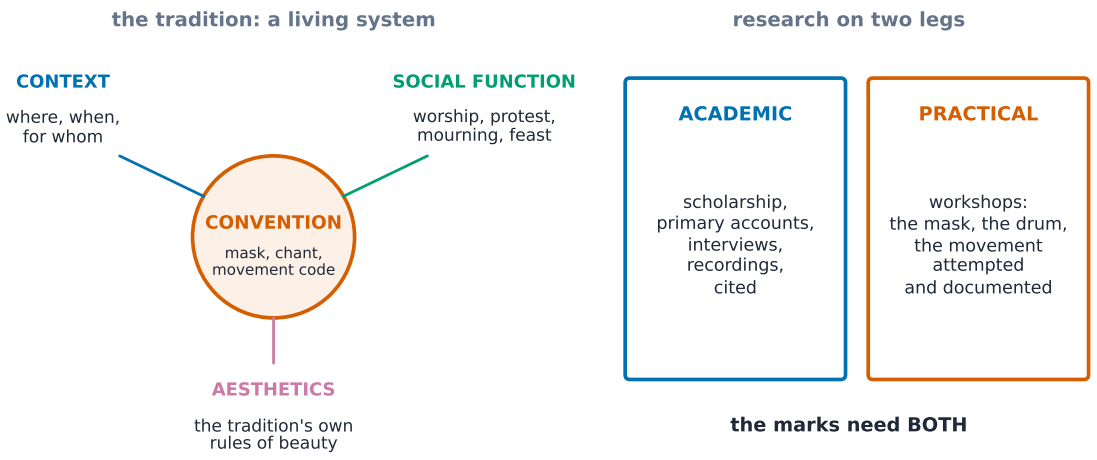
IB Diploma Programme Theatre SL (first assessment 2024; current guide). The research presentation is shared by SL and HL (30% at SL, 20% at HL): plan, deliver and video-record an individual presentation of 15 minutes maximum on an UNFAMILIAR world theatre tradition, providing evidence of academic and practical research with a list of all sources cited. 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.

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.

Collaborative original theatre

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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.

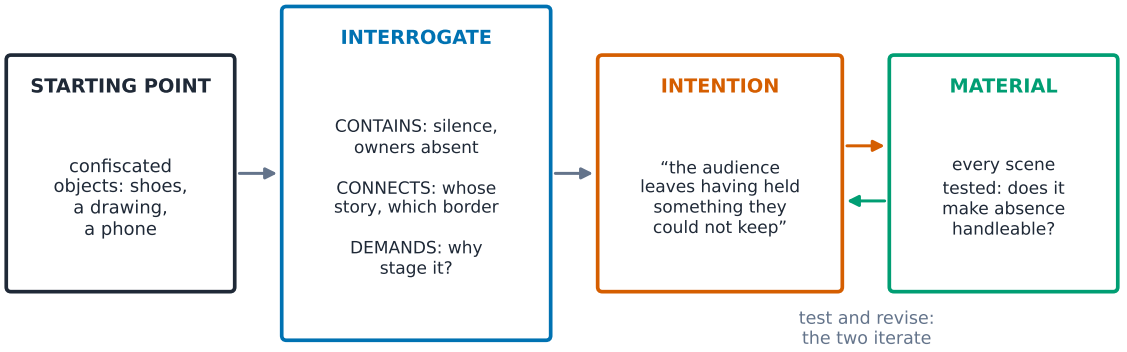
Must-know for collaborative creation:

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".