

A-LEVEL DRAMA AND THEATRE

Understanding and designing theatre lighting

7262

Teaching guide: lighting design

Please note: this guide contains references to a number of designers/practitioners, not all of whom are prescribed practitioners for the AQA AS and A-level Drama and Theatre specifications. For assessment of AS Component 2, A-level Component 2 and A-level Component 3, students **must** select from the prescribed practitioner list published in the AS and A-level specifications.

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Understanding theatre lighting

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to introduce you to some of the different elements of stage lighting, and to give you some ways of approaching and understanding theatre lighting designs. It will suggest some **key questions** you can consider when you see or create a theatre lighting design.

What is the lighting doing?

Lighting design in theatre goes beyond simply making sure that the audience can see the stage (although this is very important!). Light can be used to establish the time or location of a performance, or to create and enhance mood and atmosphere.

Time and location are the ‘when’ and ‘where’ of a production. Lighting designers need to consider the period and genre of a play, as well as the venue where the performance will take place. They also need to respond to the social, historical and cultural context of the production. For a play text, this might mean thinking about when and where the play was written, as well as when and where it is set. Productions that are set indoors and at night will need a different quality of light to productions set outside in the midday sun.

Mood and atmosphere is the feeling that the production creates for the audience. Lighting is very significant in creating mood and atmosphere: audiences will associate different qualities of light with different moods. This can be done through the colour of the light used. For example, blue lighting is often said to create a cold or night-time

effect on stage. Moods and atmospheres can also be achieved through the intensity, or brightness, of the light. This is usually called the **level** of the lighting. Very low **levels** of lighting, for example, can give a mysterious feel to a space, often placing the actors in shadow or half-light.

When you consider a lighting design, ask yourself whether the light is there to indicate a specific time or location, whether it is creating a specific atmosphere or mood for the audience, or whether it is doing both: sometimes, a playwright or director uses a certain location or time deliberately to create a mood or atmosphere and this could be reflected in the lighting design.

Remember: everything’s deliberate!

Good lighting design is a series of deliberate decisions. Always assume that anything on stage has been put there for a reason and contributes to the audience’s experience.

Think about... quality of light

Light looks different in different places and at different times. It is a good idea to start thinking about how light looks in real life. You can do this by searching for images of light at different times of day and comparing them: how does a sunrise look different to a sunset, for example? You can also consider the quality of light in places you see regularly, for example, your school, home or garden. How does the light there change in sunny or cloudy weather? How is it different sitting in a room lit with bright fluorescent strip lights to a room lit with small lamps or candles?

What style is the lighting?

Theatre productions use a range of styles, and the lighting designer needs to respond to the overall style of the production. It is important to be able to identify the style of a production in order to understand how and why the lighting design has been put together. Some examples of styles include:

Realism

Realist productions incorporate elements that are meant to look like real life. Realism can be total or partial. Total realism means a production that looks as close to real life as possible, so lighting designs for these productions need to mimic lighting in real life. Some lighting designers say that this is deceptively difficult to achieve. Partial realism incorporates realistic elements into a production that might not be realistic overall, for example using a lighting design that has some realistic and some non-realistic elements.

Symbolism

Symbolist productions are more interested in communicating an idea to the audience than in representing real life. Symbolism allows the lighting designer to create a design that communicates some of these ideas to an audience, perhaps through deliberately using certain colours for certain moments or **spotlighting** certain characters.

Minimalism

Not all productions have to be large-scale. Minimalist productions use empty spaces and rely on the actors to create an experience for the audience. In minimalist theatre, light can be used to create entire settings, or a location can be changed simply by changing the **lighting state**. Productions that use minimal costume and set often rely on complex lighting.

Fantasy

Fantasy productions allow the designer to create a new world. For lighting designers, this might mean the use of a range of colours or even **internal** or **practical lights** or **strobe lights** to create magical effects. **Strobe** lighting should be used very carefully as it can present risks to actors and audiences. You can read more [here](#). It is worth remembering that a fantastical design still needs to maintain an internal logic so that the

audience can understand and engage with the world of the production.

What decisions has the designer made?

A lighting designer's job is to make deliberate decisions about what the audience see in the stage space. Part of understanding a lighting design is considering what decisions have been made and what effect they might have on an audience. Lighting designers might make decisions related to:

Colour: the colour of the light itself, which can be altered using lighting gels (thin pieces of coloured plastic that are placed over the lantern). Different colours can create different effects and moods. For example, using red and orange light might give the impression of a fire. Colours also have different associations for the audience. For example blue light can feel cold and amber or yellow light can feel warm. It is also important to consider the colour of the surface that the light is hitting: different coloured light can change the colour of different surfaces. You can experiment with this by shining blue, red or green light onto a blue surface, and seeing how the colour of the surface appears to change. Remember that how colours mix in light (called **additive colour**) is different to how they mix in paint (called **subtractive colour**). The primary colours of light are red, blue and green, and when these are all mixed together, the light becomes white.

Intensity: how bright each **lantern** is. Theatre **lanterns** allow the designer to change their intensity (or **level**) for different effects: they are not just 'on' or 'off', but set at levels usually numbered between 1 and 10 or 1 and 100, depending on the **lighting desk**. This allows the designer to balance the light across the stage space.

Focus: how defined the edge of each beam of light is. Theatre **lanterns** allow the designer to alter the size and focus of the beam, so that edges can either be sharp or soft. Sharp edges can highlight a certain area of the stage or performer (for example in a **spotlight** or **pinspot**), whereas soft edges can blend the light from one **lantern** into light from another lantern.

Shadow: where the stage is dark. Lighting designers do not only control what the audience see, but also what they cannot see

Shadows can be used to great effect in creating atmosphere on stage. They can also give the audience a specific impression of a character. For example, an actor who emerges from the shadow might be playing a character who is 'shady' in their dealings!

Remember: 'reading' a stage

When an audience looks at a lighting design, they will believe that what they are seeing is important and significant. We say that audiences 'read' the design: they identify important elements of the lighting and work out what they think these mean. When you interpret a lighting design, you are also reading the stage. Designers make decisions about what they think will 'read best' (that is, be most effective and clearest to understand) for an audience.

Think about... blackouts and transitions

It is unusual for a production to only use one **lighting state**. When a lighting designer wants to move from one **lighting state** to the next, it is called a **transition**.

Transitions can vary in speed from very fast (called a **snap**) to very slow. When one **lighting state** fades into another slowly, the audience may not notice the change until it is complete or nearly complete. Some designers use this to great effect in performances, slowly shifting the mood on stage or the time of day represented. When the stage is left in complete darkness a **blackout** occurs. **Blackouts** can be useful for indicating to the audience that a production has finished or that a time or location has significantly changed. You can also use **blackouts** for changing **scenery** although you will need to add some **working light** (light for the stage crew to see by!). Many directors prefer audiences to see a **set change** in order to retain their attention and focus.

What about the audience?

Part of understanding a lighting design is understanding the effect of the **lighting states** on an audience. Useful questions to consider are:

Where are the audience?

Different theatre spaces create different relationships between actors and audience. For example, theatres can be end-on, thrust, in-the-round, or traverse; performances can also be **promenade**, **immersive** or **site specific**. Further information on these **configurations** can be found in the resource on set design and in the glossary.

When you are designing lighting or analysing a lighting design, you should carefully consider the **configuration** of the performance space and what influence this might have, for example on where the **lanterns** are placed. **Lanterns** can be hung over the stage or over the audience pointing towards the stage on **front of house** lighting bars. They can also be placed in the **wings** or on the stage floor.

Each of these **configurations** also creates a different challenge for the lighting designer, who will need to make sure that the audience can see the stage and the actors. Certain **configurations** present extra challenges. For example, for theatre **in-the-round**, the lighting designer needs to ensure that **lanterns** aren't shining directly into audience members' eyes! When working **in-the-round**, **thrust** or **traverse**, there is also more risk of **spill** (when light falls on an area of the stage where it isn't wanted).

What sort of experience is the designer creating?

Some productions choose to use lighting to create a specific experience for the audience. This can include using very bright light to make the audience feel uncomfortable, or bringing up the **housetlights** at a certain point in the performance. This can make the audience very aware of being in the theatre and break any illusion of the **fourth wall**. Lighting designers can also use very low **levels** of light, meaning that the audience have to concentrate very hard to see.

Examples in action

Example 1:

Natasha Katz's design for *The Glass Menagerie*

Natasha Katz created the lighting design for the production of Tennessee William's play *The Glass Menagerie* at the Booth Theatre, New York in 2014. You can see photographs and video footage of the production [here](#).

The link to an image is [here](#), and is referred to in the following bullet points:

- Much of the stage is in shadow, focusing the audience's attention on the scene and creating a dreamlike mood.
- The use of blue can be read in different ways: it could be that the scene is taking place at night (blue is often associated with the quality of light at night-time). It also makes the space feel unreal and slightly cold.
- The set is floating on a large pool of water. The lighting design makes use of this, creating reflections. Water is notoriously difficult to light on stage!
- The cool blue is contrasted with the warm amber colour of the light on the actors' faces. The lighting creates an intimate atmosphere between the two characters.
- Despite the low **levels** of light overall, the actors' faces are still clearly lit, meaning that the audience can follow the action.
- The candle gives the room more warmth, and suggests that the scene takes place at night. Notice that warm light from **lanterns** is used to supplement the light from the candles.

What does Williams say about the play's lighting?

In his production notes for the play, Williams says that the play's lighting should be dim and not realistic, reflecting the theme of memory. He also talks about light in religious paintings as an inspiration for the lighting in the play. You can read more of Williams' notes on lighting in the introduction to *The Glass Menagerie* (see Williams, T, *The Glass Menagerie*, Penguin, London 2009, p. xviii).

Katz's lighting design uses colour and shadow to give the stage a dreamlike quality, reflecting Williams' 'atmosphere of memory'. The design is very effective: in 2014, Katz's lighting design for *The Glass Menagerie* was awarded the Tony Award for Best Lighting Design in a Play.

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Example 2:

Paule Constable's design for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

Paule Constable's lighting design for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* includes **LEDs**, light boxes and projections. You can see more images [here](#).

The link to an image is [here](#), and is referred to in the following bullet points:

- Like Katz's design for *The Glass Menagerie*, Constable has chosen to use a lot of blue light. Do you think that the effect of the blue is different here?
- The walls combine projection with **LEDs**. Christopher, the central character in the play, is autistic. The images on the walls can comment on the show, letting the audience into Christopher's way of seeing the world.
- Christopher is in a **spotlight**, creating a colour contrast between him and the rest of the set. He also seems very isolated in this circle of light. Notice how the edges of the spotlight have been softened by changing its focus.
- The light in this scene creates some interesting shadows, for example the shadows behind the actors **upstage** and the shadow beneath Christopher.
- These light boxes frame the space and can change colour throughout the production. Constable says that because the show takes place inside the head of the character Christopher, it has to have a self-conscious look. You can read more [here](#).
- *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* was originally produced at the National Theatre's Cottesloe Theatre (now called the Dorfman Theatre). Research different spaces where this production has played to compare the lighting design in different venues.

Reflections

Like Katz's design, Constable's work on *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is also award-winning (Laurence Olivier Award for Best Lighting Design, (2013) and Tony Award for Best Lighting Design in a Play, (2015)). What do you think makes these designs so special? What is particularly effective in these designs?

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Do it yourself

Below are links to images from two different productions of *Much Ado about Nothing* (Globe Theatre, 2011, and World Shakespeare Festival 2012). Compare the use of lighting in the two photographs. There are some suggestions below to start your discussion.

Links to the images are below:

Tom Piper's design: [here](#).

Globe Theatre: [here](#).

The Globe Theatre is a reproduction of an Elizabethan playhouse. This means that the productions take place in the open air. Looking at the image from the Globe Theatre (the second link, consider the role of a lighting designer in this production. How does the outdoor setting change the lighting designer's job? What problems and advantages might there be to lighting a production that takes place outdoors?

How will the lighting for this production alter on different days? How might the natural light in the production change the audience's experience of location, time and atmosphere?

Next door to The Globe is the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. This is a reproduction of a Jacobean-era theatre, where performances take place by candlelight.

- Where are the **lanterns**? How visible are they to the audience?
- How much control does the lighting designer seem to have over the light in each image?
- What colours are used and why?
- What is the quality of light in each image?
- What atmosphere does the lighting create?
- What audience response would you expect from these designs?

Designing theatre lighting

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to introduce you to some ways that you can approach designing your own lighting for the theatre. It will give you some starting points for design, as well as suggesting ways that you can present your designs.

What do I need to do?

A lighting designer's role is to create a performance space that is interesting, creative and engaging for the audience, and that allows the audience to see the right thing at the right moment. Your design needs to work for the production. You need to be clear about what the production needs (this is called the production **brief**) and how you will creatively interpret these needs to develop your final design.

Your **brief** can take different forms: either from a written text or a group devised project. Essentially, the **brief** is an overview of the production project, explaining what it will be about, what ideas are already decided, and what aims you and your fellow theatre makers have.

Try making a mind-map of all the things your production needs:

- What different locations and times do you need?
- What mood/atmosphere do you need to create? Should this be influenced by a specific period?
- Do scenes take place indoors or outdoors?
- Are there certain areas of the stage that need to be isolated?

- Do you need any **working lights** for the actors or crew?
- Do you need any **internal** or **practical** lights (e.g. lamps)?

Once you have your **brief**, you can use it as a starting point to develop your ideas. As a designer, your role is to bring together the needs of the production with your own creative ideas and experiences. Starting with the needs will ensure that your designs are appropriate, practical and functional. As theatre is a practical art form, it is important to make sure that what you design will function in practice, in performance, and be effective for an audience.

Design tip

Most design projects will present you with a problem or challenge to solve. Sometimes this is a difficult lighting effect, or something that is very difficult to light (for example, a mirror). Finding solutions to these problems can be a great starting point for your design work and can even determine the style of your whole design. Starting from a problem can be a very effective way to create a design. Lighting can also help to solve these sort of problems: perhaps lighting would be a good way to create the river needed for the washerwomen in Lorca's play *Yerma*.

Remember: health and safety

Theatres can be dangerous places, and health and safety legislation is used in theatre rehearsals and performances to protect cast, crew and audience. Make sure that your design is safe: consider the potential risks of your design and try to find ways to reduce or remove them.

Read more at

[hse.gov.uk/entertainment/theatre-tv/index.htm](https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/theatre-tv/index.htm).

Lighting designers also need to consider the specific dangers of electricity (for example, electrical load), and, when **rigging lanterns**, the regulations around working at height:

[hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/the-law.htm](https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/the-law.htm).

What practicalities should I consider?

Like all aspects of theatre design, stage lighting is a practical art form. A lighting design has to work in practice, in a performance. Here are some practical questions to consider when starting your design:

Where do I want the audience to look?

Lighting can be used to direct the audience's attention to different parts of the stage. This can be particularly important if you are lighting a **composite** set that contains a number of different locations. You can use light to tell the audience which part of the set is important at each moment of the production. Make sure that audiences can see important things, like the actors' faces.

Where will the lanterns be placed?

Lanterns can be hung above the stage or to the side of the stage, as well as placed on the stage floor. The position of the **lantern** gives a different effect, either **top lighting**, **side lighting** or **up lighting** the actor. Experiment with changing the position of your **lantern** to see how the placement of the **lantern** has an effect on the audience's view of the actor.

Is the lighting comfortable for the audience?

Lighting that is too bright, or not pointing in the right direction, can cause problems for the audience. Are there any **lanterns** shining in

the audience's eyes or reflected off certain surfaces?

What resources do you have available?

Be creative with your resources: a lighting design can use expensive theatre lanterns, as well as other everyday **light sources**. Torches shone on reflective surfaces, for example, can be a very effective way to create the impression of shafts of light at sunrise.

Is it possible?

All designers also need to be sensible about their resources: consider whether you can achieve your design within a sensible budget, and whether your ideas are possible in a live performance. If you intend to hire extra **lanterns**, do you have the capacity available in your electrical supply?

Design tip

Gauzes are pieces of fabric that are used on stage to create effects. **Gauze** fabric appears solid when lit from the front and transparent when lit from behind. A **lantern** behind a **gauze** can create an interesting shadow or silhouette for the audience. It is also possible to paint or project an image onto a **gauze**, and then bring up the light behind (**back light**) to make the image slowly disappear and the hidden set come into view.

Where can I get inspiration?

Research is a very important part of lighting design. You can use research to develop your own ideas and to make sure that you understand the location and era of the production you are designing.

Understanding the context

Research is vital in understanding the historical, social and cultural context of your production. Look into the era and location of your production's setting. This is not only useful research for realist productions, but for all design work: you might not want to accurately re-create the era on stage, but you may take elements to inspire your use of colour, intensity, focus and shadow in your final design. Areas for research might include:

- The style of the era or location itself. What would artificial, indoor light be like in the period of the play?
- If your play is set in a real place, what that place looks like (if you can visit it, even better!).
- What things are or were important about daily life for people of different social classes in this era or location?
- What other lighting designs have been done for productions of this play?
- What impact do you want the lighting to have on an audience?

Developing your ideas

As well as contextual research, you should gather materials relating to your own ideas. Experimenting with **light sources** is important: what different effects do you get from theatre **lanterns**, torches or lamps? Consider the different quality of light from a candle, gas mantel, 40 watt electric bulb and a strip light. Images of light, for example, in paintings or photographs, are very useful for thinking about the quality of light you can create on stage. Consider the source of light in these images: it won't always be realistic! Don't restrict yourself to things you already know: visits to libraries, art galleries or museums can be great sources of inspiration.

Design tip

A mood board is a good way to gather your research together and compare your ideas. Include images that you think are relevant from your contextual and ideas-led research, as well as images of light at different times and in different places. You could also include samples of lighting **gels**, **internal** lights and anything else that is relevant to developing your final design.

How can I present my ideas?

Lighting designers use different ways to present their ideas and develop their designs. Here are four that you might like to consider when you are preparing designs for your AQA assessments:

Lighting plans

Lighting plans indicate where the **lanterns** will be placed to create the lighting design. These are normally drawn **to scale**, as a **ground plan**, with important elements of set marked on. Lighting **bars** are also added and the position of each **lantern**, as well as its type and colour, is indicated.

Lighting cue list

A lighting **cue list** is a list of the different **lighting states** in the production, with an indication of what the state looks like, its level, how it is **established** (**fade** or **snap** for example) and when in the production it takes place (the line or action that cues the lighting change).

White card models or model boxes

Lighting designers can work with set designers to experiment with lighting effects using a set model. This allows a lighting

designer to use a torch or similar small light to see the effect of their design choices on the set.

Sketches

Sketches can show the intended effect of your lighting design, particularly if you are interested in creating an atmosphere, exploring shadows, or using specific colours. You can add samples of **gels** or **gobos** to your sketches to give a clear idea of your choice of colour or effect.

Most designers will use a combination of these methods to present their ideas.

Design tip

Gobos can be used to create shapes with light. These are metal frames that are placed in front of a **light source**. The frames have shapes cut into them, so that when the **lantern** is on, the outline of the shape can be seen on the stage floor or wall. **Gobos** can be used to create the effect of trees, water, or moonlight, for example. Although professional **gobos** should be used with stage **lanterns**, you can experiment with **gobo** effects by cutting shapes out of cardboard and holding them in front of a torch. You can develop this effect using gels. For example, you might create a stained glass window effect for the church scene in *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Examples in action

Different types of stage lanterns

As a lighting designer, it is important to understand your equipment. Stage lights are called **lanterns**. Different **lanterns** have different functions and create different effects. Here are four examples of different types of **lanterns** and their possible uses, as well as some other important lighting equipment.

Fresnel [fre-nell]

The fresnel is a good general **lantern**. It produces a light with soft edges and this means that a number of fresnels can be used together to evenly cover a whole stage with light. In this picture, the fresnel has **barn doors**. These can be adjusted to change the shape of the beam of light.

Example of a fresnel lantern is [here](#).

Profile

Profiles create a defined beam of light that is useful as a **spotlight** for an actor, or to pick out details on a set. They are usually long, thin **lanterns**. Profiles are also good **lanterns** for **gobos**. Attached to the front of the profile is a **gate** where the **gobo** or **gel** can be placed

Example of a profile lantern is [here](#).

Par can

A par can produces a strong beam of light that is suitable for creating bold colours on stage. Par cans can be identified by their rounded shape. These **lanterns** do not normally have **barn doors**, so you often cannot create the sharp shapes possible with a fresnel. In this picture, the par can has a **gel** frame: coloured **gel** can be placed here to change the colour of the beam. Birdies are very small **lanterns** that look like par cans and use a par can lamp.

Example of a par can lantern is [here](#).

Floods

Floods are **lanterns** that can flood a space with light. They can be used against a **backdrop** or as a floor light. Floods cannot be focused, so are better for lighting set than actors. They can be used individually or in a set, as seen in this picture.

Example of a flood lantern is [here](#).

Strobe

Strobes rapidly pulse to create a special effect (for example to make the actors appear like they are moving in slow motion).

Example of a strobe lantern is [here](#).

Lighting desk

Lighting equipment is controlled through the **lighting desk**. This is where the lighting technicians can control the **level** and **fade** of each **lantern** and **lighting state**.

Example of a lighting desk lantern is [here](#).

General cover vs specials

There are two main parts to most lighting designs. **General cover** is the light that makes sure the audience can see, by covering the important parts of the stage. **Specials** are lights that create a specific effect, for example highlighting an actor or part of the set or using a **gobo**.

Next time you are at the theatre, take a moment before the performance begins to look at the lighting rig and see what types of **lantern** you can identify. During the performance, see if you can identify moments when different **lanterns** have been used.

Understanding a lighting plan

Below is an example of a lighting plan, taken from the website:

stagelightingguide.co.uk.

The link to the image is [here](#).

The features of the plan have been marked so that you can understand how it works and what information it includes.

- Furniture like sofas and chairs are important to consider: when actors are sitting on these, their faces will be lower down. The lighting designer must make sure that they are still well lit.
- Each type of **lantern** is marked using a different shape. The square shape indicates a fresnel.
- The circular and square shape indicates a profile. It is clear from the shape which direction the **lantern** is pointing.
- A key has been included to tell you what colour lighting **gel** each lantern will require. Warm indicates a colour like amber, yellow or **straw**. Cool indicates a colour like blue.
- The plan includes a **ground plan** of the set that shows important elements of **scenery** and furniture, including entrances and exits. In your designs, you can also think about lighting off stage areas, for example the spaces that can be seen through a door or window.
- Each **lantern** is marked onto the plan. This tells the person who will **rig** the **lanterns** where in the space each **lantern** should be placed. The **lanterns** in this plan are hung on bars over the stage and **auditorium**. Bars over the auditorium are called **front of house bars**.

Do it yourself

Creating a lighting cue list

Creating a lighting **cue list** makes you think about the different **lighting states** you will need for your performance. You will also need to consider what time or location you are working with, and what mood or atmosphere you want to create. This step-by-step guide will help you to create a lighting **cue list** for a scene from the play you are working

1. Know your resources

Start by thinking about your performance space and the lighting facilities available to you. Do you have any other resources you might want to use (for example a **gauze**, torches or **internal** lights?)

2. Know the action

Look closely at the scene you are working on and think about what you need to include. Are there any lighting changes in the text? Does anyone turn a light on or off, for example? Is it morning or night?

3. Know the meaning

Now look again at the text and identify any key moments or themes. Is this a scene with a specific atmosphere? Does something important change? Could you reflect this through light?

4. Mark the lighting cues

On a grid like the one on the next page, mark the points at which the lighting will need to change and fill in the **cue** for this to happen.

5. Mark the lighting states

What will each **lighting state** look like? Add this to the grid.

6. Think about transitions

How will you get from one **lighting state** to the next? Will the light **fade** slowly or quickly **snap**? How will the scene begin and end?

7. Reflect

The purpose of the **cue list** is to give you an overview of your design. If something doesn't work, try it a different way. Make sure you try out your lighting ideas in sufficient time to solve any problems: there will certainly be some! You will need a lighting plan to go with your **cue list**.

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Cue	State	Transition
1. Light fades up as MAN 1 enters.	Early summer evening. Sunshine through the kitchen window. Atmosphere should be warm (use some warm coloured gels, eg straw). See lighting plan for number of lanterns and positioning. Level 8.	Quick fade .
2. When WOMAN 1 slams the door.	<p>Later evening. Sun is going down. Script says it is getting a little colder outside, so add some blues. Bring level of warm lanterns down to 6.</p> <p>Think about when the lighting state needs to be finished ('established') as well as when it starts. This will tell you how long the transition should be.</p>	Very slow fade (over 10 minutes). State should be established when MAN 2 says "It's getting darker now".
3. When MAN 2 switches on the kitchen light.	<p>Add kitchen light.</p> <p><u>This effect could be an internal light controlled by the actors.</u></p>	Snap .
4. When the argument between MAN 1 and WOMAN 1 starts.	Night-time: the sun has completely gone and there is moonlight through the trees. Use a gobo for this effect. Lantern with gobo at level 10.	Slow fade (over 4 minutes).
5. As WOMAN 1 grabs the knife.	<p>Bring levels of light down so that the stage is darker (level 3) Leave some lanterns on level 10 to create big shadows of MAN 1 and WOMAN 1 on the walls of the set.</p> <p><i>This change is about atmosphere rather than time or location.</i></p>	Quick fade .

Component 1 – Understanding drama (written exam)

Section A and B set texts:

Lighting design: these pages offer brief, specific advice related to the three different aspects of the A-level assessment.

In addition to the brief extracts, refer to the relevant pages of the specification for the full requirements.

For plays in **List A**, for the purposes of the exam students must be prepared to adopt the perspective of at least two of the following three roles:

- performer
- designer (lighting, sound, set and costume)
- director.

For plays in **List B**, for the purposes of the exam students must be prepared to adopt the perspective of director, performer and designer (lighting, sound, set, costume).

First, get to know the play in as much detail as possible.

Consider any details given in the stage directions or moments of action which make particular demands on the lighting design.

Define the play's demands

The geographical setting:

For example, the change between the opening, aboard a ship, and the arrival in Australia in *Our Country's Good*.

The historical period:

For example, the type of lighting, such as oil lamps, appropriate to the room in *Hedda Gabler* and the stage lighting needed to augment this.

The social class of the characters:

For example, the social pretensions of the Samsa family in *Metamorphosis*.

Research

Before you decide what you want to use in your own design, know what would be accurate to the geographical setting, historical period and the social class of the characters in your play.

Explore books, the internet, photographs, paintings, museums, actual venues. This way you see what the room in *The Glass Menagerie* would be like and how it would be lit at different stages of the play or how your lighting effects might clarify the opening section of *Bronte*.

Decide:

Whether your lighting is to be relatively unobtrusive in style (aiming to make the action clearly visible and directing the audience's focus to the appropriate section of the stage, or stylised and non-realistic in approach. Remember that all of these choices need to be justifiable in the play as a whole and changes need to add to the audience's experience, not to distract them.

The changing moods in *Yerma* need to be reflected in the lighting design but there are also contrasts to be incorporated such as the candle-lit procession.

Lighting plot:

Ensure you have addressed every act, scene and requirement of the action. Consider the lighting rig you intend to use and define the effects in detail. Sketches can help to make clear the areas the lighting is to cover, the positioning of the lanterns and their types. At the beginning of *Cloud 9* the stage direction is 'Low bright sun' and in *Jerusalem*, 'England at midnight. A clearing in a moonlit wood.' How might you achieve these effects? What **lanterns**, **levels**, positions and **gels** would help to ensure the play starts with the required impact?

Effectiveness for an audience:

Consider what effect you wish to create for an audience, by the designs as a whole and at particular moments. Do your designs achieve these aims?

Review:

Assess each decision you have made in relation to the ideas within this whole section on 'Understanding theatre lighting'; how would you explain and, most especially, **justify** these in relation to the setting, the action and the mood/atmosphere you wish to convey and the impact you wish your lighting designs to have **on the audience**?

Component 1 (written paper), Section C: Live theatre production

‘Students should learn how to:

- articulate their understanding of how the performers/designers/director (as appropriate) communicated meaning to the audience
- consider in detail how aspects of the performance piece contributed to the impact of the production
- assess how aspects of the production contributed to its effectiveness as a piece.’

Writing about lighting design in a play you have seen

When discussing a play you have seen, make accurate and confident use of the vocabulary from this document.

Before the exam:

- As soon as possible after your visit to the theatre, write notes and make detailed sketches from which you can revise (don’t expect to remember everything in several months’ time).

In the exam:

- **Read the question;** you are not simply being asked to write generally about the lighting. Identify the **focus** of the question.

Make it clear what the lighting effects were:

If the question asks you to describe the lighting effects, do so in as much detail as possible. Could someone who has not seen the production visualise the lighting precisely?

- Consider the practical aspects such as the **levels, angles, colour, fades** and **special effects**.

Assess the production in relation to the requirements of the question.

For example, the question might refer to the way lighting created atmosphere or the effect for an audience.

- **Define** precisely what aspects of the atmosphere and effects were created and outline when this happened in the performance?
- Were there moments when the change of lighting was deliberately noticeable? What effect did this have for an audience?
- Assess the effect of the lighting in enhancing the presentation and helping the audience’s understanding and appreciation of the play.

Always refer to particular moments.

Components 2 and 3 (practical performance)

‘Students should aim to understand productions in terms of the relevant content listed in **Knowledge and understanding** [page 11], and in addition:

- the perceived or stated aims of the production team and their success in achieving them
- the creative collaboration of the performers, the designers, the director and other members of the creative team
- the audience experience and response.’

Read all the details for lighting designer on page 17.

It is the student's lighting **design** that is assessed. Although students are expected to operate the lighting equipment when possible, this will not form part of the assessment.

The devised piece must be influenced by the work and methodologies of one prescribed practitioner. See pages 19, 20 and 21 for the list of practitioners.

Apply the variety of aspects discussed in the whole of the material in ‘Understanding theatre lighting’.

Where applicable:

- **research**
- **refine**
- be prepared to **apply** the **influence** of your **chosen practitioner**.

Create your brief

- In consultation with the rest of the group, define exactly what the practical piece requires.
- Ensure that everyone agrees and that you all have the same overview, concept and intentions.
- Consider the effect your design will have on an audience and whether this is exactly what is required.

Review the practicalities

- Be realistic in your approach to your lighting design. Will what you visualise in your head be possible to create with the equipment you have available?
- Are there special effects you want to create? Ensure these are achievable. For example projection is a creative idea but the realisation is not always as easy as expected.
- Which areas of the stage need to be the main focus at each moment of the performance?
- Will your use of colour be appropriate? Green may look eerie and strange but what effect will it have on the colour of the set, the costumes and the actors' faces?
- An area of shadow at the rear of the stage may look effective in theory or on a model, but does any vital moment of action happen, insufficiently lit, in this area?
- Do your initial ideas reflect the aim and intentions of the group as a whole?

Rehearsal dates

- Create a schedule which allows for changes and alteration; there are always unexpected challenges, problems or opportunities.
- Your lighting needs to be ready in time for you to see the actors, in costume, on the set in a technical rehearsal.
- Your deadline is not the day of the exam.

Create your design

Now create your mood board or sketches, as well as a list of lanterns and gels or the full lighting plot.

Review the practicalities again

- Are all your effects working fluently and in time with the requirements of the group?
- Are all lanterns rigged, focused and angled correctly?
- Have all safety regulations been adhered to?

Watch rehearsals with an open mind

- Your lighting is there to serve the production, not to be imaginative and interesting but unrelated to the demands of the performance!

Consult the glossary for key words that you can use when talking or writing about theatre design, and for definitions of important terms.

Any words in ***bold italics*** can be found in the glossary.

