

Candidate 2 evidence

Specimen question paper

Section 1

Question 1 - The Crucible

Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" is a suspenseful and tense play, inspired by the Salem witch trials during the 1600s. The story follows a village in hysteria after a group of girls get accused of practicing witchcraft and summoning the devil. The play revolves around a man named John Proctor, who despite having past, dark regrets, redeems himself and dies a tragic hero. Throughout this piece, a variety of moods and atmospheres are explored, making this play an exciting and versatile play to direct.

One of Arthur Miller's main inspirations when writing "The Crucible" was McCarthyism. McCarthyism was a frightening period in America during the 1950s where people were accused as communists. If labelled as a communist during this period, you were at great risk of losing your job. This was a scary time for citizens and caused a lot of turmoil. Similar to McCarthyism, people in Salem are also accused, so it's important when directing to draw from Miller's inspiration and understand the tense atmosphere the people of Salem would be feeling. The play begins with an instant panic. A little girl named Betty falls into a coma, and won't wake up, this is the catalyst that drives all the chaos and panic. "My Betty be hearty soon?" – Tituba. From this opening line, it's immediately clear something is wrong. Tituba will say this in a panicked tone to emphasise the drama and hysteria. As a director I want the audience to feel the same urgency and panic these characters are feeling. To do so I would place the main source and drive of this scene centre stage, in this case it is Betty tucked away in her bed. This places Betty in full view of the audience, despite where they are seated, forcing them to endure the suspense. I would place the other characters evenly across the rest of the stage, with equal proximities to one another, this creates an atmosphere of chaos as the whole stage is covered with panicked individuals, helping further highlight the chaotic atmosphere. As a director I would choose to have 'in the round' staging, this is where the audience is seated every side of the stage. This helps capture and involve the audience even further

into this unravelling drama. Creating more tension and suspense. "My Betty not goin' die..." - Tituba, this line is important to set the scale of how bad Betty's condition is, without giving too much away, so this line will be said with quiet volume and a gentle tone, to show the seriousness of the situation. There will be a pause of silence after this line is delivered, forcing the audience to sit in the tense silence of this macabre situation.

Introductions and first impressions are very important on how we view that character and their future actions throughout the rest of the play. Following this point, relationships between characters add to our perception and judgment of them. John Proctor's relationships between his wife (Elizabeth) and his affair (Abigail) play a vital role within the play which add to the overall atmosphere and tension. Out of the three, we meet Abigail Williams first, during Act 1. Abigail is a 17-year-old girl involved in the accusations of witchcraft. I would direct the actor of Abigail to act into her more childish side, so when it's revealed she is involved in a relationship with Proctor, the audience feels even more awkward and an oppressed atmosphere can be achieved. Abigail enters the scene while her uncle is stood over Betty's bed in a state of distress. I would direct Abigail to walk into the scene with closed off body language by having her head down, hands gripping her dress and eyeline almost directly to the floor. This gives us an impression of her low status and gives us an idea that she is pretty young. Abigail should remain closed off when addressing Parris "Uncle" - Abigail. She will say this using quiet volume and a slow pace to show her fear of getting in trouble.

Later in Act 1 John Proctor enters. I want him to enter very contrastingly from Abigail. It's important to establish and show clearly the age difference between Abigail and Proctor to create a disturbing atmosphere. Proctor will enter confidently, he will walk on with a strong steady pace, upright posture and high eyeline. This shows his high status as he walks the room. Abigail then pulls aside Proctor for an intimate chat. This is an important scene that helps convey their relationship towards the audience. As the director I want to create an awkwardness between them that even the audience can feel. All the other characters during this scene are off stage. I will place Proctor and Abigail centre stage under a bright off-white spotlight. By placing them in a spotlight limits the size of the stage, making this conversation more intimate and personal. Tension is created between them as Proctor explains how their secret affair needs to end. Abigail delivers some

inappropriate lines towards Proctor, like “Gah! I’d almost forgot how strong you are John Proctor!” – Abigail. She will say this confidently with a seductive tone, and quick pace to show her excitement to see him. Because this line is said before fully revealing to the audience their relationship status, it will help create an uneasy mood as from this line its clear they are more than just acquaintances or even friends. And because from their entrances, we can clearly see their ages with Abigails childish behaviour and Proctors strong, established movements, it makes this scene even more uncomfortable and uneasy for the audience to watch. Proctor then reveals to Abigail that they need to stop whatever is going on between them. “Abby, you’ll put it out of mind. I’ll not be comin’ for you more.” – Proctor will deliver this with a soft tone, showcasing that he still has unresolved feelings for Abigail. I would add a small pause after Abby, to let the audience hang on the fact he has called her Abby, not Abigail.

Due to his affair with a minor, our perception of the character John Proctor is not all positive at the moment. As hysteria builds throughout the village, more and more are being accused as witches, eventually even Proctor. At first we of course don’t feel as disheartened about Proctor being accused than others however during the last scene, Proctors court case, we see him develop as a character and change from a man who is stubborn and arrogant to a man that will take pride in himself. In this last scene I will place Proctor downstage centre, sitting down on a chair and the judges behind him standing up. This not only shows contrast between Proctor and the judges as different levels and proximities are being used but shows great contrast between the character of Proctor we were introduced to at the beginning. Highlighting his characters downfall and crumbling essence of what was once a man respected by all. There will be a bright white soft spotlight focussed on Proctor to draw the audience’s attention mainly on him. As for the rest of the stage, a gentle white wash will fit the mood perfectly by creating an eerie and mysterious atmosphere. I want to keep Proctors wife, Elizebeth in this scene upstage left, watching over as her husband is sentenced to his death. This will create an oppressive atmosphere as she watches over the deterioration of Proctor.

“Because it is my name, Because I will not have another in my life” – Proctor. This line is a pivotal turning point of Proctors character, where he refuses to sign a form, giving up his name in return for his life. Instead, he for once takes pride for who he is and embraces

that he will always be John Proctor, no one else. This is a powerful line, so I will have the actor of John deliver it with a loud volume, confident tone and steady pace, to show that despite the fact that by refusing to sign his name off, he has sentenced himself to his death and would probably be terrified in this moment, he can't let the judges win, so decides not to show fear. This creates a noble atmosphere and turns Proctor into a tragic hero.

In conclusion "The Crucible" by Arthur Miller has many opportunities and scenes within it to create and leave an impactful scar on the audience. Making sure relationships are enhanced and first impressions of characters are directed with thought on how the audience will perceive these characters, makes "The Crucible" a perfect play to create many different moods and atmospheres.

Section 2

Question 7 – Prima Facie

Prima Facie is a play written by Suzie Miller, directed by Justin Martin, and performed by Jodie Comer. It tells the heart wrenching story of a woman named Tessa Ensler, a criminal defence barrister who faces the truth about the flaws in the legal system concerning sexual assault after her own tragic experience with losing a case to her rapist. The captivating play takes on many difficult issues and themes, including sexual assault and awareness. Award winning director Justin Martin was particularly interested in this piece of theatre, due to his associate work with Good Chance Theatre, a group dedicated to raising awareness through theatre. This was one of the main reasons Martin took on the incredibly challenging part of director in Prima Facie, because of its main purpose to spread stories of sexual assault and recognise it in court. The play delves into many contrasts throughout its entirety, drawing from both the strength of Comer's acting and subtext, as well as Martin's directing and the effect this has on the overall impact of the play.

To me, Martin's direction and Comer's acting in the opening scene felt incredibly effective at conveying contrast between itself and the ending. Martin's decision to have Tessa jump around and move things whilst speaking kept me feeling stimulated and engaged as I wondered what would happen next. As the scene progressed, I felt myself move to the edge of my seat as it reached a climax. Martin instructed Comer to jump on top of the table gesturing her hand in the shape of a gun and shouting 'Bang!'. At this moment, Martin worked with the lighting director Natasha Chivers, and sound directors Ben & Max Ringham to accompany this moment, with a bright flash from strips of bright white LEDs outlining the stage, and a victorious sounding pre-recorded SFX in the background, signalling that she was winning the case. This felt like a directing decision that kept me totally engaged in that moment, happy for Tessa, yet trying to ignore the uneasy feeling that came with it, due to the issue of her defending a possible sexual assaulter. This moment was thought provoking, and it made clear just how much research had been done to make it feel like the audience were in that court room, watching everything unfold in real time. Comer's acting alongside this kept my attention rapt and equally as gutted when the contrasts to the ending scene made themselves visible. Her acting in the

opening was loud and confident, drawing the audience into the character and her story. Her laid-back body language and demeanour as the lights go up for the first time is humorous – sitting on a chair whilst eating a pot noodle. It provides a gentle introduction to Tessa's character and gives the audience more of a shock when she comes alive in court, her eye contact with the audience never once wavering, her volume loud, and her tone excitable. It is clear she loves her job, never doubting her faith in the justice system. When we look at the ending, the contrast from Tessa's character is startling, a definite result of Comer's acting ability. In the place of the cool, confident character we are introduced to in the beginning of the play, we see a far meeker woman, torn down by being taken advantage of, and having her life figuratively flipped upside down. Comer expresses this through her body language, as she sits on a chair centre stage, her shoulders tense and drawn in to make her appear as small as she can be. The contrast in her character is frightening, how someone so optimistic could turn so timid. Even as she begins talking, she has a nervous tone and a quiet volume, truly demonstrating just how badly her self-image has been ripped apart by her fight against her rapist. It's the effectiveness of Martin's directions and the intensity of Comer's acting that kept me resonating with Tessa's story and set me up for the impact of the devastating contrast at the end of the performance, where she is once again in court, but this time, she is on the other side of the law, essentially powerless to prevailing in her case. This intentional contrast from beginning to end kept me just as enraptured as the opening scene, if not more. The directing and acting talent in both scenes could not have been more intentional in the powerful atmosphere it creates.

Martin's directing choices in the assault scene were enthralling yet extremely disturbing to me as an audience member, particularly due to the contrast from the date scene that happens prior to this. From the minute the atmosphere changed from romantic, I began to feel a sense of dread and tension fill the air. Martin and Comer worked together to make this scene a hard watch, yet so captivating that I was unable to look away from what was happening. Martin went for a unique approach to this scene, giving the sense that we were only seeing Tessa's thoughts, only feeling Tessa's feelings - Julian's emotions were completely barred to us, which truly made this moment the horrific picture that Martin and Comer were envisioning. Comer was propping herself up, all the focus on her, with

no props or different characters to keep her afloat, only a singular spotlight set on her, and a singular chair that kept her balance. Martin wanted to showcase Tessa's vulnerability in this moment, and by doing so, let Comer fully ensnare my senses. I couldn't tear my eyes away from her performance, despite thinking several thoughts at once. *This is terrible. Who could do such a thing? I've known people who have been victims of this. How must they feel when watching something like this? Relieved that awareness is being spread? Terrified at how real it feels?* Comer's acting in this moment really put the scene further than anything else I have ever watched. Whilst she was speaking, she would remain completely rigid, her body language conveying the paralysing fear she was feeling. When she spoke, her voice would crack, with a distressed tone, the pace and volume of her speech slow and unsteady. Her facial expressions, however, drew me in as if I was watching this happen in person. The grief stricken look in her eyes, her eyebrows furrowed, and her mouth stretched a grimace that looked painful. It spoke to me, not only as an audience member but as a woman. I constantly thought back to the drastic contrast between Tessa's excitement at her initial date with Julian and the traumatising aftermath of the assault. To go from being so romantic in her eyes, to a cold monster that neither Tessa nor the audience could understand his feelings. His mannerisms switching in a matter of minutes as he comforts Tessa as she throws up, to assaulting her mere moments later – it's a terrifying and unfortunate reality, something any self-respective person should understand. It was incredibly powerful and made me wonder who else was feeling the things I felt. Were other people as awestruck as me? The acting and direction of this scene made it so incredibly powerful that I believe it would be difficult for any audience member to see it and not feel remorse in any way, shape or form.

In the police questioning scene, there is a strong message about pushing through uncomfortable situations to have your voice heard. In this scene, Tessa is being questioned by the police about her sexual assault allegation she has made against Julian. She describes what is happening to her, and how uncomfortable she is feeling in the moment. Her facial expression is blank and her voice monotone. Martin worked together in this scene with Natasha Chivers, using a video camera projected onto the wall, directing Comer to have her back turned away from the audience, highlighting how alienated she feels from the rest of the world. This projects onto the audience as it feels increasingly like we aren't watching Tessa anymore, but a recording on a screen, emphasising how

unaffected the police can be after watching hundreds of these recordings. It contrasts heavily with the opening scene as we can feel Tessa slipping away from the confident character we had in the beginning. Suzie Miller's choice to only write dialogue for Tessa, instead of having Comer embody the police officer during the questioning further accentuates how detached sexual assault victims can feel after the assault. She feels scrutinised and humiliated as the policeman asks her more about the night, leading her to feel more and more distressed, yet she continues to push on and try to answer all questions she can, despite the policeman's emotionless invasiveness. Comer constantly shows Tessa's vulnerability after her sexual assault encounter through only her voice and facial expressions as that is the only part of her the audience can see, yet she continues to push through to take her case to court, showing that they must be resilient instead of giving up, and feel as though they've tried instead of knowing they've done nothing to attempt to remedy the situation. It is a stark contrast to her trying to catch out her opponent in court in the opening of the play, and Comer's acting really helps convey the sort of remorse she must be feeling for using all of the tactics in court that she must now try to combat in order for her to not be disparaged in court. Comer and Martin's aptitude shines in this scene, as they produce a feeling of alienation and despair that many sexual assault victims have probably felt during their experience. The moment contrasts incredibly with the opening scene, and keeps the audience alert and thinking of what it would be like to experience these ordeals – a truly incredible outcome from such a hard-hitting performance.

To conclude, *Prima Facie* explores contrast spectacularly, through the different directing styles and acting choices made by Martin and Comer. Certainly, I believe that theatre challenges people's beliefs, and none I've seen can do it better than *Prima Facie*. The way it tells a comprehensive story of Tessa's life before the case, really draws us in, makes us like her. That's why it feels like such a shock when no happy ending comes out of it. We have been rooting for Tessa since the very beginning, through Jodie Comer's incredible acting and Justin Martin's astounding directing. This play is truly a masterpiece that will continue to spread awareness about the deep-rooted issue of sexual assault and legal justice for generations, I believe that everyone should be spreading the word about this breathtaking piece of theatre. From the acting and direction to the writing and designing, every piece of this show is immaculate and will stick with me forever.