

2010 – Staging a Scene

Sample answer : 2010 examination– based on *Romeo and Juliet*

(b) Imagine you are directing a stage production of this play. Select a scene where this tension is evident and explain what you, as director, would do to convey the tension between these two characters on stage. (15)

STAGING AND SETTING

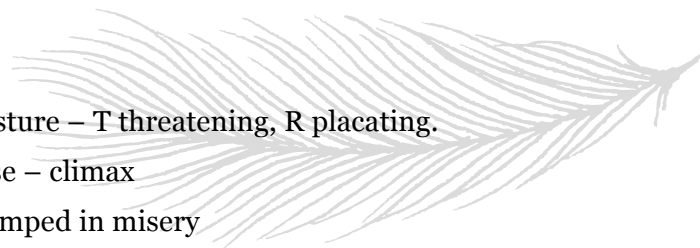
- This is something you should have studied for your unseen drama, so think of everything you learned when preparing for that section.
- The questions on staging and setting can sometimes give you a helpful list of things to consider when answering. Look at the example from 2009 in which you are advised to think about setting, lighting, stage directions, music, sound or dialogue.
- Note the difference between the 2010 and 2009 questions. In the former you are free to use your own imagination, while in the latter you must focus on what information exists in the play.

Note: This is the second part of the question, and is worth 15 marks. That means you should write three paragraphs. Each paragraph should be a well-developed point. Make your point, develop it, and support it with suitable quotation from and/or reference to the play.

My answer is longer than you would be expected to write in the exam, but it is no harm to see what can be said on the topic.

Plan:

1. Brief intro
2. Stage positioning at start – focus on main characters
3. Lighting – sweat – tension
4. Costumes – red = danger etc. R – calmer colours


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5. Stance / Posture – T threatening, R placating.
 6. Fight – noise – climax
 7. End – R slumped in misery

If I were directing this play, I would focus on staging, costumes, lighting and posture in order to convey the tension between Romeo and Tybalt.


Assuming that the stage was a traditional proscenium arch, I would have the principal characters standing centre stage from the start. The pages, servants and members of the public would stand stage left and right, allowing the main characters a position of dominance.

In the opening lines, Shakespeare has Benvolio repeatedly mention the heat of the day – and of the characters: ‘For now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring.’ I would use bright lights to give the impression of a baking summer sun and would have the main characters’ hair slightly damp, as if with sweat. This would make them look uncomfortable and perhaps agitated, which would add to the sense of tension in the scene.

Romeo and Tybalt should be dressed in bright, but contrasting, costumes. I would dress Tybalt in a flaming orange or red as he is a hot-headed young man: Benvolio describes him as the ‘fiery Tybalt’ earlier in the play. Red and orange signify danger and passion, both of which are appropriate for a man who is so



The opening line reflects the wording of the question and shows the direction the answer will take. There is no need to name the play or playwright again, as this has been done in the first part of the question.



Every paragraph should refer back to the question.

Think of what you learned about colours when preparing for your media studies questions. Explain your choices.

easily stirred to anger, particularly by the sight of his arch-enemy Romeo. I would dress Romeo in a deep blue costume, more sober and less flashy than Tybalt's, but still eye-catching. The difference between their costumes would give the audience a visual clue to the lack of harmony between the two young men.

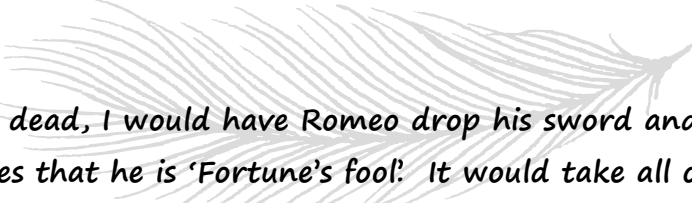
I would have Tybalt adopt an aggressive stance, with his sword pointed towards Romeo in the early part of their exchange when he calls Romeo a villain, and asks him to 'turn and draw.' Romeo should respond to these taunts in a measured manner, perhaps raising his hands and holding them towards Tybalt, palm outward, in a gesture that the audience may view as placatory but which Mercutio would label 'calm dishonourable, vile submission.' The dramatic irony in this scene - Romeo and Tybalt are now kinsmen by marriage - adds to the tension because Romeo's unexpected desire to make peace only forces Mercutio to draw his sword in order to save face in front of the Capulets.

Explain the reason for your having Romeo adopt this

When Tybalt kills Mercutio, the mood in the scene changes quite dramatically. Romeo becomes a man of action once more. I would dim the lights slightly at the announcement of Mercutio's death, and place spotlights on Romeo and on Tybalt as he re-enters. Both men should stand centre stage. This would show that the tension between the pair has reached a climax and that a resolution is imminent. I would make the fight between the two full of action and loud, angry cries. Their swords would ring, and the bystanders would add their voices to the din.

This cacophony would accompany the violence and hatred being expressed in the scene.

Use a rich and varied vocabulary.



When Tybalt falls dead, I would have Romeo drop his sword and sink to his knees as he realises that he is 'Fortune's fool'. It would take all of Benvolio's efforts to alert him to the danger of the Prince and his men approaching. I think this would be an appropriate end to the tense and ultimately tragic encounter between the two young men.

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