



# ***Hedda Gabler***

Complete Text Guide for AS and A Level

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# Teacher's Introduction

Ibsen's classic play *Hedda Gabler* offers a powerful discussion of the role of women in fin de siècle bourgeois society. Its inclusion in the new A Level Drama and Theatre specifications highlights its significance as a key naturalistic text from the specific theatrical movement of that name. Across the AQA, Edexcel and Eduqas (WJEC) AS and A Level specifications work on the play is assessed using the third Assessment Objective (Ofqual determined):

## Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

*AO3: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed.*

- ✪ In the A Level Edexcel specification, the text is studied in Component 3. Section C: Interpreting a Performance Text requires students to present their ideas for a production of a set text for a contemporary audience in the light of one practitioner from a set list.
- ✪ In both the AS and A Level AQA specifications the text is studied in Component 1 (Section A: Drama Through the Ages) where the focus in this clean copy written exam is on an exploration of key aspects of the play.
- ✪ In both the AS and A Level Eduqas (WJEC) specifications the text is listed in the pre-1956 list in the Component 2 (AS) and 3 (A Level) written exam where candidates are asked to consider how performance texts are constructed to be performed.

It is intended to provide teachers with engaging practical activities, approaches to rehearsal and research and detailed notes on the text which can be used in both the classroom and drama studio. Students are encouraged to explore the text practically and truly engage with the 'page to stage' approach embedded within the new specifications. In order to support students' preparation to meet the demands of the written exam papers there are brief analytical exercises which can be used to scaffold possible responses. Mindful of the Ofqual requirement that students respond as an actor, director and designer the guide provides exercises which prompt students to consider the challenge of staging from a range of perspectives.

## How to use it

In the first section of the resource, there are handouts which can be given directly to students and which deal with the socio-political, historical and cultural context elements of the play and playwright. The second section includes analyses of the four acts of the play and allows students to explore the text, both practically and theoretically, from the perspective of actors, directors and designers. The final section focuses on how to develop a directorial concept of the play.

Please note – references are made to the specific translation of the play text published by Nick Hern Books, ISBN 9781854598424.

April 2017

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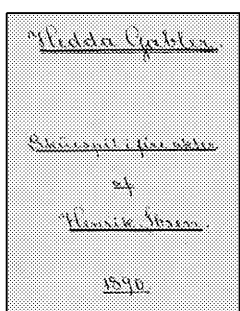
# A. Introductory Notes and Explorations

## 1. Henrik Ibsen the Playwright

Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) was a leading Norwegian poet, playwright and author who is often referred to as one of the leading exponents of the naturalistic movement in the theatre. Ibsen was born to a successful merchant family in the port town of Skien. Despite his family's social connections, when Ibsen was seven his father's business failed and the family were forced to sell the town house and move to their summer cottage in the country. The suffering of his mother during this time as well as the secretive nature of his parents' marriage (marked by incestuous family connections) would create some of the seminal themes in his plays. At 15 Ibsen was forced to leave school and moved to the small town of Grimstad to become an apprentice pharmacist. A liaison with a household servant when Ibsen was 18 produced an illegitimate child whose upbringing he paid for. Relationships between parents and their children are also woven throughout his plays with particular emphasis on liaisons on the rest of a family. Despite a brief dalliance with the idea of law, Ibsen had committed himself to a life of writing. His first play *The Burial Mound* attracted critical attention. In the early part of his career Ibsen appeared to draw inspiration from folk tales, appearing to be particularly interested in tales with subliminal moral messages.

By 1858 Ibsen had gained considerable experience in the theatre. His detailed understanding of stagecraft can clearly be seen to infuse his full-scale later plays. In 1858 Ibsen settled in Christiania and became creative director of the Christiania Theatre. In the same year he married. He followed in 1859 by the birth of their only child Sigurd (who later became a Minister). The couple lived in very poor circumstances and as a result moved to Sorrento in Italy with a later spell in Dresden in Germany from 1868 and Munich. In this period Ibsen tried to develop a 'drama of ideas' with a series of plays which challenged established social ideas such as the nature of power, love and family respectability. He focused on the of entrenched social morality on both the individual and the community.

Later in his career Ibsen focused more explicitly on psychological conflict and created around strong and dynamic women trapped in society's expectations. The female protagonists of *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* appear spectacularly. His understanding of the tension between the genteel role they are expected to play and which drive the human soul. His later plays are often classed with those of the characteristic of a realist movement which sought to bring the drama to the drawing room of the Scandinavian theatres of the period.



Ibsen returned to Norway in 1891 after a damaging affair with an old Austrian girl with whom he had become infatuated. *Hedda Gabler* took place at the Residenz Theatre in Munich in 1891. The final years of his life were characterised by staging of plays including *John Gabriel Borkman* with an enhanced focus on family and a series of strokes. He died in Christiania in 1906, now Oslo. The government of Norway continue to promote his dramatic works holding a centenary Ibsen year in 2006.

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## 2. Social, Historical, Political Context of the Play

### Norwegian Politics and Society

The early nineteenth century was characterised by severe rural poverty and mass starvation. Norway was also passed between Sweden and Denmark and subject to considerable export taxation in the forestry industry. After the industrial revolution, advances in dairy production and steam freight enabled both urban and rural communities to stabilise and prosper. Norway's first political party, the Liberal Party, was formed in 1884 in order to try to create a democratic government. For Norway was ruled by a Swedish monarchy from 1814. In a referendum in 1905 Norwegians voted overwhelmingly for independence from Sweden and a Norwegian monarchy was established. Universal suffrage for men was introduced in 1898.

### The Naturalism

A movement in late nineteenth and early twentieth century drama to a genre which aimed to 'show life' through a range of techniques. Three main techniques were:

- The play should be based on careful study of the social conditions of the time.
- Characters' motives should be based on their heredity and environment.
- Presentation of the play should be seen in use of the scientific method.

The work of the naturalists helped to create a new style of staging of drama.

### Late Nineteenth Century Europe

Seismic changes in empirical landscape with collapse of Napoleonic, Spanish and Holy Roman imperialism and expansion of British, Russian, German and French empires. Rapidly accelerating scientific discovery and advance including invention of light bulb, telephone, gramophone and motor car. Huge movements and growth in national populations including significant impacts of industrialisation. In the cultural sphere painters moved from Impressionism to Cubism and writers created epic novels depicting man's struggle to survive and prosper.

### Feminism and Women's Rights

In line with a great deal of social change in the nineteenth century, women's rights were granted. In 1854 women were granted property but had to be granted the vote in 1918. The hierarchical social structure provided domestic service for bourgeois women and mothers. Up until the 1920s women transferred from fathers to that of the mother. The first woman was the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons in 1919.



Working in pairs or on your own, answer these questions in bullet points.

- Which aspects of Ibsen's biography do you think influenced his writing of *Hedda Gabler*?
- How might the social and historical context of late nineteenth century Norway have influenced Ibsen's writing of the play?
- What kind of role did women play in Ibsen's society? How might this have influenced the character of Hedda and Mrs Elvsted?

### Challenge Task

Find a key scene from the play which could illustrate the socio-cultural context of the play and make some notes on how you might stage it.

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### 3. Original Performance Context and Reception

The world premiere of the play took place at the Residenz Theatre, Munich in 1890. Ibsen present. Ibsen was said to be displeased by the declamatory nature of the production. This production was followed swiftly by a slightly better performance in Frankfurt. The production was well received by either public or critics. The first well-produced production was at the Vaudeville Theatre in London starring the well-regarded Victorian actress. Critics were however, unimpressed by the 'horrible story!' (Daily Telegraph) 'Hedda's soul is a-crawl with the foulest passions of humanity' (Pictorial Weekly). Hedda in the first American production in 1898 in New York. In February 1899 of the Moscow Art Theatre's first season with Maria Andreeva as Hedda.

Several cultural commentators of the time also responded to the negative reception. 'On the occasion of *Hedda Gabler*' in 1891, the novelist Henry James pronounced the play 'comparatively muddled and mystified'. The experience of the 1891 production led to the comment 'Hedda Gabler is probably an ironic pleasantry, the artistic exercise in the vision of human infirmities'.

According to Michael Meyer, acknowledged authority on Ibsen's work, the preliminary jottings for the play 'make it clear that he intended the play as a tragedy of the purposeless of life, and in particular of the purposeless social conventions imposed on women of his time both by their upbringing and by the social conventions which limited their activities' (Introduction to *Ibsen Plays: Two Volumes*, 1980 edition, Methuen). From our perusal of the early reviews it is certainly clear that audiences responded to the tragedy of the narrative but were perhaps less sympathetic to the psychological rationale for Hedda's behaviour and actions.

A number of contextual factors appear to have influenced Ibsen in planning and drafting the play. Ibsen was a well-connected man of letters and mixed with both academics and men of business. The characters in the play could therefore be said to be modeled on acquaintances and people of note. In 1880 a marriage between a society beauty and research scholar was well known for its social imbalance. A Dane named Julius Hoffory was also acknowledged by Ibsen to be the source of the character of Loevborg, famous for having written his manuscript during a night-long orgy. Miss Tesman was also based on an old lady from Trondheim who cared for her sister until the latter died. The character of Hedda has less clear origins although some academics believe the Austrian girl Emilie, with whom he had been so infatuated, as the inspiration and figure of Hedda. It is certainly possible that the character was the result of what Emilie might become in 10 years' time – bored, scheming, psychologically

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## 4. Notable Productions of the Play

Many prominent actresses have played the role of Hedda. In the twentieth century amongst other notable actresses are the following experts in characterisation: Ingrid Bergman, Janet Suzman, Diana Rigg, Claire Bloom, Kelly McGillis, Fiona Shaw, and Cate Blanchett. Cate Blanchett provided one of the most powerful performances in the 1970s when she played the role for the RSC. In 1975 Jackson reprised the role in an Oscar nominated version directed by Trevor Nunn.

The 2005 Almeida production directed by Richard Eyre and with Eve Best was highly acclaimed and subsequently transferred to the West End for 3 months. In 2007 it was revived and was staged at the West Yorkshire Playhouse and at the Liverpool Playhouse. In 2009 the play opened at the National Theatre with Matthew Lloyd with Gillian Kearney as Hedda Gabler. In 2009 the play opened to a mixed reception with Mary-Louise Parker as Hedda.

The play has also had a number of international stagings. For example, in 2007 *Hedda Gabler* in Tehran was halted while director Vahid Rahbani was investigated. In 2008 an Iranian news agency blasted the classic drama in play in a review, calling it 'hedonistic' with symbols of a 'sexual slavery cult'.

Other notable international productions include a Serbian production which was staged at the National Theatre in Belgrade in 2011, and Brian Friel's 2012 adaptation of the play at the National Theatre production that received mixed reviews, with many critics focusing particularly on the performance as Hedda:



*The Old Vic Theatre*

*'What Smith's fine performance shows is a woman's options narrow.'* **The Guardian, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2012.**

*'Her Hedda has a doll-like beauty and a smile that she brings terrific poise and style to the role but also beyond her – entirely credible malevolence. The study of her husband's aunt and the hapless old school companion's desperation is brilliantly caught, with little sadistic pleasure.'* **The Telegraph, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2012.**



Choose one of the productions listed here and conduct some research. Try to find photographs or descriptions of staging techniques used.

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## B. Plot, Form and Structure

### 1. Plot

Hedda Gabler, daughter of one of the most respected military generals in Norway, moves from honeymoon to her new villa in Oslo. Her husband is George Tesman, a man clearly committed to his research and who, it is equally clear, Hedda does not love. George's elderly and over fussy Aunt Miss Tesman who expresses her admiration for

Soon into the play Eilert Loevborg, a recovering alcoholic and George's acquaintance, arrives at Tesman's villa. Having met Hedda's old school friend Thea Elvsted at the party, Loevborg pronounces himself to be a reformed character who has hopes for a future. He has recently published a text in the same field as George and also completed his manuscript with her help. When Hedda and Eilert speak privately it is clear that they have previously had a relationship. Eilert's new social standing makes him a candidate for the post Hedda has pinned his hopes on. Without the salary Hedda and George's future financial future is a surprise Eilert declares that he has no interest in the academic post and intends to publish his manuscript as a sequel to his recently published and well-received work.

Apparently jealous of Eilert's relationship with Thea, Hedda encourages Eilert to attend the party of their friend Judge Brack. When he returns from the party George and Eilert Loevborg became inebriated and after leaving the party lost his manuscript to Hedda. When Eilert appears at the Tesman house he confesses his loss to Hedda and a pistol, encouraging him to kill himself rather than face ruin. In a key theatrical moment Hedda burns Loevborg's manuscript to the fire, telling George that she is protecting the family name.

In the final act of the play Judge Brack arrives to announce that Eilert has killed himself. In horror George combines with Thea to use her notes to reconstruct the man's life. When Judge Brack confirms that Eilert's death was accidental in a way that is not as heroic as she imagined, Hedda is horrified. Brack further layers the mystery by telling Hedda he knows where the pistol has come from and telling Hedda that with this information he is in his power. Hedda retreats into a smaller room in the house, locks the door and kills herself. Horrified, the remaining characters find her body.

### 2. Form and Structure

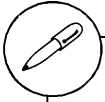
*Hedda Gabler* is divided into four acts and the events of the play take place over the course of a day and a half. In classical terms, the play adheres to the Aristotelian model of form and structure (384–322BC) whereby the audience are encouraged to suspend disbelief and look through a window into a real world and tracking the events which unfold. However, the play departs from other elements of the classical model of **tragedy** with the absence of a chorus. In many ways Hedda is the classical anti-hero and her erratic and pernicious nature. Her hubris (or central flaw) is multi-layered. Ibsen was clearly a playwright who was expanding the genre of naturalism – where things happen as a result of the character's actions. **Realism** where the psychological impulses of the character drive the central action. However, nevertheless, some elements of tragedy in the doomed nature of the love affair and in the masochistic nature of the character of Eilert himself. Ibsen also uses Hedda and George as a tool for creating **humour and comedy** in the play. His complete understanding of the depths of Hedda's cruelty and indifference towards him creates some comedy. Hedda engages in quick fire exchange both with him and with others in his presence.

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Conduct some further research into the difference between realism and naturalism below.

<b>Realism</b>	<b>Naturalism</b>
Focus on individual	Focus on environment

Try to find some examples of contemporary productions of 'realist' plays and how they are used to stage the text.

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# C. Activities Act by Act

## Act 1

### 1.1 Design

The curtain opens on the newly-acquired villa of the newly-married Tesman. Hedda arrives with her servant Berthe. Although Berthe has been caring for George, Tesman has agreed that Berthe should now leave her household to serve the Tesmans.

Miss Tesman and Berthe discuss George's recent promotion, which is then Hedda enters. The cost and scale of the recent honeymoon and house purchase is discussed. Hedda informs George that she has paid for the furniture and rugs by remortgaging the house. The atmosphere of the room subsequently shifts as Hedda enters and asks George to leave the windows open. Hedda is also dismissive of the gifts of flowers from George, Tesman's new hat and the position of her piano.

Ibsen's description of the room is key to the creation of mood and atmosphere. The description of the room is described as follows:

*A large, elegant, well-furnished, contemporary (1890) drawing room: a sofa, an armchair and footstool by a large porcelain stove, an upright piano. Fine carpets intended for entertaining. A smaller room lies behind where a large portrait of an officer can be seen. There are fresh flowers in vases and bouquets on tables all over the room. Light floods through French windows. It's autumn.*

Given the naturalistic style of the play directors need to consider the clues about the character, plot and setting. The rest of the play takes place in the same two rooms. Changes to furniture position and props.



**Stage design:** Read the opening of Act 1 and develop your ideas for stage design with a decision about stage space. How will a decision to use a thrust stage affect the use of furniture or create effective proxemics?

Use the staging template for a box set given in Appendix 3 if appropriate and available.

Use the following key questions to guide you:

- How will the use of stage space communicate ideas about Hedda's taste to the audience?
- How could the choice and position of furniture communicate messages about Hedda to the audience?
- What role will colour play in the set?
- How will lighting interact with the set to create atmosphere?

Use the alphabetical glossary given in Appendix 1 to check definitions for the terms in the glossary as you start to develop your knowledge and understanding.

Box set diagram

Parcan

Proxemics

Naturalistic style

Profile spot

Diegetic (and non)

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## 1.2 Characterisation

After Miss Tesman's departure Ibsen introduces another key female character friend Thea Elvsted. Whilst Hedda is described as having a 'pale face; cold blue eyes' Thea is described as a 'lively woman...with a soft and attractive face, blue hair – and lots of it.' Ibsen carefully develops the plot by using Thea to prepare the way for the reappearance of Eilert Loevborg in the lives of the Tesmans. Eilert's publishing world appears to be potentially overshadowed by his affair with Mrs. Sheriff. With the news that Thea has left her husband and Eilert has limited delight in the scene of confusion and panic laid out for her and pushes George

During the conversation between Thea and Hedda we also learn more about Hedda. Not only does Thea suggest that Hedda was 'in a different world socially' but also Hedda that she bullied and threatened her:

*'You used to pull my hair if I passed you on the stairs. You said that you would kill me.'*

The **theme** of power and domination begins to emerge strongly here and becomes a central theme of the play.



Imagine you are an actor playing the character of either Hedda or Thea and complete the character analysis table below.

What she says about herself?	What other characters say about her	What she says about others
E.g.: Hedda: 'People don't do things like that'	Thea: 'You were two years above me and I was terrified of you'	Hedda: 'So you've seen him have you Thea'

Now compare the columns and try to begin to build a 'Role on the Wall' for Hedda during this first act of the play. Use Appendix 2 to help you if useful.

## 1.3 Language

When Judge Brack enters the Tesman's villa Berthe reports that he 'wants to see the Doctor and his lady wife'. Ibsen appears to ridicule him in his description of 'fashionable grey suit, perhaps too young for him' and a monocle.

The language which Brack uses appears formal in company, when conversation begins to use subterfuge and cutting statements. His use of French also suggests status and pretention.

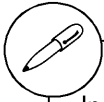


Read the remainder of Act 1 and consider the number of adjectives used by Judge Brack as his shifting tone. Make some notes using the following questions:

- How does Brack communicate with Hedda?
- How does Brack inform George of the potential threats to his situation?
- How does Hedda's language and tone change as the scene unfolds?

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### Practical focus

In order to prepare to answer the following question (which might appear on any of the written papers in the specific format used by the awarding body) we are going to use a few of Stanislavski's techniques.

As an actor how would you **realise** the character of Hedda in performance? Refer specifically to development of the relationship between Hedda and George in Act 1.

You might want to consider using some of the techniques referenced in the box below.

**7.1** Conduct some research into Stanislavski's system and in a small group, choose two of Stanislavski's techniques to explore the character in a 15-minute structured workshop with your peers. Create a plan for the workshop. Discuss with another group.

### Written activity

**7.2** Create a plan for the above question with close reference to facial expression and posture giving clear reasons for your choices and using examples of moments from the play. Submit a draft response.



### *Stanislavski (1863–1938) – A brief practitioner overview*

Stanislavski was born into a wealthy family with a great interest and love of theatre. He is widely recognised as one of the key theatre practitioners of the twentieth century and worked as an actor, director and artistic director of the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT), the company which he founded at the age of 33 with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko. With MAT Stanislavski produced the work of some of the leading naturalistic playwrights of his time, including Ibsen, Chekhov, Gorky and Bulgakov. The MAT also promoted the value of the ensemble and a realistic, well-researched design concept. However, Stanislavski is perhaps most famous for his work on the development of a system of training for the actor which prioritises psychological truth. In a series of books, Stanislavski wrote about the development of his system through a series of exercises. Although he stressed the importance of disciplined preparation, Stanislavski's system was not intended to be scientific. The key theoretical techniques of Stanislavski's system, *circumstances, magic if, units and objectives, tempo-rhythm and emotion*, came together into a method which prized the use of actions to realise a character's 'Physical Action'.

Stanislavski was also a keen collaborator and worked with both the designer and the director Meyerhold to explore a range of other genres including symbolism. Stanislavski founded the Opera-Dramatic Studio and trained his first cohort of actors there. His work with Meyerhold in the final years of his life was intended to synthesise Stanislavski's system with the MOPA to create the ultimate truthful performance.

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## Act 2

### 2.1 Staging the theme of female entrapment – Hedda and George

At the start of Act 2 Hedda is shooting her father's guns impulsively into the air. Her arrival of Judge Brack in his evening attire leads to a discussion between the two characters about Hedda and George's courtship. Ibsen uses this scene to lay bare the extent of Hedda's love for George as well as the material reason for her marriage. In this scene it is clear that the tension between the two characters which is based on something beyond sexual tension. Hedda's feelings of frustration at the limitations of her social and personal life are evident.



As a director, consider how you might draw out the extent of Hedda's frustration and her interaction between the two characters. Read the scene and consider Ibsen's suggestions for use of space. The following prompts should help you to make your own suggestions.

- Where are the 'units of action' in this scene? Mark these onto the script using a pencil.
- For each unit of action annotate a specific objective using the active verb form.
- For each verb, notate a specific action e.g. 'leans forward towards the Judge'.
- Add some notes about pace – noting rapid, slow and staccato movements.

How might a director highlight Hedda's frustration for an audience? Try the exercise where a unit of action is repeated to varying degrees of intensity and with exaggerated timing. This exercise should enable the actors to capture the important shifts in tension and create strategies for using stage space to create emotion.

### 2.2 Creating atmosphere – the relationship between Loevli and Eilert

Eilert's first entrance onto the stage is clearly intended by Ibsen to draw attention to the relationship between him and George. Where George is described as 'young-looking, a little plump', although he is the same age Eilert 'looks older' and is 'good-looking, but somewhat wasted'. Despite George's fears about the possibility of his rival being revealed to be on the manuscript of his new book. When he is offered a price for the manuscript he refuses although this abstemiousness changes dramatically later as he succumbs to the temptations. As Brack and Tesman retire to the back room, Hedda and Loevli are left on the pretence that Hedda will share some photos of her and George's honeymoon. In this discussion Ibsen appears to suggest that Eilert and Hedda may previously have had a relationship. Eilert still harbours strong feelings for her. The structure of this act enables us to learn more about the relationships between Eilert, Hedda and Thea as Thea then reveals her concern for Eilert's welfare given his previous inclination to drunkenness. The manipulation of the situation continues as she shames him into accepting Brack's offer. The men depart as Berthe brings in the symbolically lit table lamp.

As a director working closely with designers, one of the key priorities for the production is to use a range of production methods to create the appropriate shifts in atmosphere and emotion between the characters. The next activity asks you to work as a designer to create a production design for the scene.

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**A design concept should be created from a clear understanding of the**

Read the rest of the act and using the same strategy as used in Activity 8, divide the act into units. Highlight or underline all of the stage directions which refer to lighting or sound. Use tables to help make some notes for lighting and sound for the different units in the act. Consider the atmosphere for the shifting relationships between characters.

Consider the possibility that music might be created by musicians incidentally. Whilst this approach may not be faithful to the naturalistic form of the play it offers a different interpretation of the play through a different genre.

	Moment of Dramatic Action	
	Unit 1	Unit 2
<b>Technical device</b>	e.g. <i>Loevborg discusses the promotion with Brack and George</i>	
<b>Lighting intensity</b> – which lamps and what level		
<b>Lighting angle</b>		
<b>Colour (use of gels)</b>		
<b>Diffusion (soft/hard)</b>		
<b>Lighting as scenery</b> – location/time of day		
<b>Sound as atmosphere</b>		
<b>Sound quality</b> – distorted/clear		
<b>Sound direction</b>		
<b>Sound volume</b>		
<b>Sound effects</b>		

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## 2.3 Staging the themes of restraint and freedom

In the original performance conditions of 1891 the themes of restraint and freedom were familiar to bourgeois European audiences. Whilst the women of middle class genteel esteem, their main role was to support the patriarch and raise a family. Looking 'pink and healthy' and 'filling out' are suggestive of this preoccupation. Reputation in upper middle class households was as highly prized as material wealth. Professional spectators would have recognised the importance of social position. In George in his drive for academic success, they would have struggled to understand his desire for freedom and control. In the final sequence of Act 2 Hedda tells Thea from the party 'like Bacchus with vine leaves in his hair, wild and heady and uncontrolled'. To understand Hedda's motives is likely to have mirrored the audience's feelings for the play's leading character.



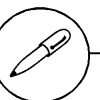
Read the final section of the act between Hedda and Thea. Working in pairs, discuss the following moments as a stimulus to create a short (three minutes) devised piece on the themes of restraint and freedom. Consider the possible use of soundscapes, choral movement and repetition. Consider using other lines from the first two acts of the play to lay out your ideas.

Hedda: 'He'll be his own man'

Hedda: 'If only the lovely lady could be there unseen'

Loevborg: 'She has the courage of her convictions'

Thea: 'So I have no power over you?'



**Written activity** – the following question is typical of the questions which are asked in Level Drama and Theatre specifications.

*As a director or designer, discuss the production methods you would employ in order to create the feeling of tension that exists in the Tesmans' marriage.*

*You must make specific reference to the social, cultural and/or historical context in your answer.*

Follow the process below to create a plan for a response.

1. Pick two sections from the first two acts of the play which reflect the tension between Hedda and Thea.
2. Create some bullet point notes on the theme in relation to the social, cultural and historical context of the play.
3. Decide whether to respond as director or designer and pick the specific production methods you focus on.
4. Write some bullet points under each of the production methods indicating how you would do it.

Now try to create a draft response to the question.

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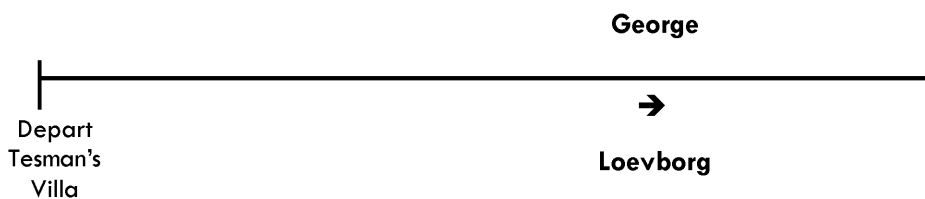
## Act 3

### 3.1 The difference between Loevborg and George

It is dawn the day after Judge Brack's dinner party and Thea and Hedda have the return of Loevborg and George. Thea has hardly slept and is eventually disturbed by Hedda's room. George returns from the party and relays to Hedda the scene that Loevborg read from his new book and declared that his inspiration was found when he has Loevborg's manuscript which he has lost in a 'Bacchanalian' stupor. Hedda tries to exploit the situation and regain that control over a man's soul that she has lost since George's departure to see his dying aunt paves the way for a private discussion with Judge Brack where he provides further details on Loevborg's actions the previous evening. In the images which Ibsen paints here we are able to see the clear contrast between



Read the scene between Hedda and George and highlight the images of the party that you find. On a sheet of A3 paper used in landscape format now plot the time of the party with George above the line and Loevborg below.



**Practical focus:** Using the information provided by this chart in small groups explore the events of the party and the loss of Loevborg's manuscript. Use the

- Who is Loevborg referring to when he refers to his 'inspiration'?
- How does George feel when he hears Loevborg reading from his manuscript?
- Where is Loevborg headed when he leaves the party?
- Where does George think that Loevborg is headed?
- How does George feel when he spots the lost manuscript?
- What does George plan to tell Hedda about the events of the evening?

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### 3.2 Exploring the character of Judge Brack

The character of Judge Brack adds a particularly menacing quality to the text. The 'others say' activity introduced in Act 1 to examine the character of Brack. Brack's super-objective is in the play.



Now use these notes to plan a response to the following question.

*Exam Question:*

*As a performer, discuss how you would develop the role of Judge Brack in a specific episode from the play to illustrate your answer.*

*You must make specific reference to the social, cultural and/or historical context in your answer.*

Pick out three key episodes from the play and in each case, annotate the text with:

- Possible actions (using Stanislavski's Method of Physical Action) and proxemics
- Vocalisation
- Audience response
- Psychological objectives

Consider how the actor in the original production might have played the role of Judge Brack. How do you think a 19th-century audience might have responded. Is Brack the real villain of the play?

Try and write the first section of the essay using Act 3 as your focal point.

### 3.3 Staging the ending of Loevborg and Thea's relationship Theatre

Loevborg enters the Tesman's villa by flinging open the door and is described as being 'half-asleep'. Thea has no idea of what has happened which creates dramatic tension. Before Loevborg can explain himself Thea reappears 'half-asleep'. Loevborg's performance of the manuscript is at odds with the real story already provided for the audience. The irony and isolating Hedda as the only character who has heard every version of the story. A comparison of the loss of the manuscript to the murder of a baby is picked up by Thea. Hedda's previously heard from her about the state of her loveless and childless marriage. Hedda's performance in the villa without a clear sense of the future.

As one of the most dramatic scenes in the play, Ibsen clearly introduces the opportunity for Thea to express the depth of Thea's attachment to Loevborg as well as the opportunity for her to express the constraints of an unhappy and unfulfilling marriage.

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The work of Kneehigh Theatre Company on magic realism presents a number of the symbolism of this scene.

Consider the potential application of Kneehigh's theatrical methods in drawing out a manuscript for the audience. Read the scene in small groups of five or six (if possible) and complete the following practical exercises:

1. Direct the text towards the audience marking the moment when a key revelation occurs.
2. Add a chorus whose role is to repeat the specific questions asked by the two main characters.
3. Develop a possible soundscape for the scene by exploring a possible sound palette of desperation, Loevborg's anxiety and Hedda's delight. Where possible add sound effects.
4. Use the chorus to improvise a non-verbal scene between Thea and Loevborg using the manuscript with Loevborg dictating and Thea scribing – try layering the improvisation with film. Explore the use of film in this scene by filming the improvisation and staging of the text.
5. Explore the addition of a choral narrative which explains and comments on the scene. How might the chorus be/represent?

### *Kneehigh Company*

Kneehigh Theatre Company were formed by Mike Shepherd and Emma Hepburn in 1980. The company uses unique devising methodologies to create theatre that is a blend of a number of theatrical elements, ensemble in style and intended to be a challenge to the audience.

The company have now developed an extensive repertoire of pieces drawing on the storytelling tradition to communicate with an audience on a deep psychological level. The work was intended to respond to the wild natural landscape of Cornwall and the use of instruments and choral storytelling. Very often this led the company to create theatre using the natural elements including the sounds of the natural environment and the soundscape. As the work has evolved the company has integrated acoustic and synthetic musical devices. The touring nature of the company enables them to work with a flexible approach to stage design. The audience are always at the heart of the narrative is told directly and anarchically directly towards them. They have established a semi-permanent home in a tent which they have called 'The Tent'. This space is intended to promote the sense of enquiry in theatre making which is missing from much contemporary theatre.

The key theatrical elements are:

- Multi-sensory storytelling – a range of elements come together to create a story appealing to the audience on a number of levels
- Clear narrative arc – usually moral or mythical in nature e.g. the ending and the impact of loss
- Multi-rolling ensemble – performers usually play instruments, dance, sing
- Multimedia and puppetry
- Pre- and post-show interaction – the show is part of a much bigger experience. Performers play music, speak to the audience and continue interacting in role
- Magic realism – symbolic use of props, fantastical hybrid characters

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### 3.4 Hedda's grand plan – the symbolic destruction of the

After Thea's departure, Loevborg confesses to Hedda that he has not destroyed the manuscript, but rather lost it. Hedda adds fuel to Loevborg's despair by providing him with a letter from herself. The act ends with the stage direction

*'After a moment Hedda opens the door of the stove, takes some pages and throws them into the fire....She throws more pages...she throws the rest of the pages'*

This is perhaps one of the most significant of Ibsen's stage directions and the audience are to appreciate the extent of Hedda's malice.



#### Practical focus

Read the remainder of the act and explore the stage direction by staging the

1. Remove the dialogue and play the sequence of actions in silence.
2. Develop a soundscape to suggest the 'killing of a child' – be sensitive in how you use sound and torment here.
3. Explore the use of space between Loevborg and Hedda in the moments before the act. Consider different levels, consider the use of Laban's 'push, pull, flick, glide' to explore movement between them. One member of the group provides directions for the other and changes the direction as the interaction develops. Try developing this in a sequence.
4. Add the manuscript to the sequence – try miming the shape of the text, then explore the difference in feel and touch for each character.

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## Act 4

### 4.1 Hedda and Tesman – exploring the subtext through non-verbal communication

Miss Tesman arrives at the Tesman's villa dressed in mourning clothes. Hedda asks for help. George returns from the side of his dead aunt, in discussion with Miss Tesman. Hedda might be pregnant, 'Perhaps Hedda has something to tell you?' Disappointed, Eilert does not know that they have his missing manuscript, George announces to him. Hedda reveals that she has burnt the manuscript, claiming to have done so for his analysis of this scene it is clear that Ibsen intends the inner world of Hedda to be revealed to the audience as much through what she doesn't say as what she does. This exchange with Thea and Brack provide us with further information about her relationship to the manuscript.



#### Read the scene and discuss the following questions:

1. Why might Hedda be uncomfortable at the idea of pregnancy?
2. Why does George believe that Hedda has destroyed the manuscript for him?
3. Why is Hedda so disapproving of Thea's actions in asking after Eilert at the end of the scene?

#### Written focus

Consider the use of punctuation to suggest the emotional peaks and troughs of the text to reflect either high or low tempo for both characters. On a landscape plot, use the x and y axes and label them A: Acts 1–4 and B: Tempo. Use different coloured lines to represent high and low tempo for both characters in this scene.

#### Practical focus

We will now use Stanislavski's work on subtext to explore the non-verbal communication in the scene.

- **Subtext** is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as 'an underlying or implied meaning or distinct theme'
- **Non-verbal communication** is defined as 'communication not involving words'

#### Try these two exercises:

1. Use thought tracking to explore motivation by asking two actors to play the scene. One actor reads the lines of text and immediately afterwards another actor, without looking at the text, says how the character really feels. Play the scene again and allow the actors to develop authentic gestures and movements which express the character's motivation.
2. Explore the power and status between the two characters by installing a set space which establish a hierarchy of positions where the floor is ground zero (taking care to be safe) represents dominance. Play the scene a line at a time and note the status revealed by the text.

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## 4.2 Hope and despair – staging themes

Judge Brack's entrance is designed once again to create dramatic tension. As he has come with the news of Loevborg's death. Thea and George agree to write the manuscript by using the notes created by Thea during the writing of the book. Hedda reveals to Hedda that Loevborg did not die the death of a romantic hero but was killed in the company of the madam of the brothel. Despite Hedda's attempts to conceal her feelings, she further reveals that she knows that the gun which killed Loevborg was provided by her. Hedda realises both the depth of Brack's desire to control and blackmail her and her own. In Thea's project she retreats from the room and shoots herself with one of her



### Practical focus – animalisation

The range of impulses displayed by the characters in this scene suggest a variety of possibilities. In order to prepare to explore this scene it could be useful to use animalisation. Choose one of the characters in the scene. Consider the animal whose character they most closely resemble. Conduct a close research study of the behaviour of the animal. On a scale of 10 represents the animal and 1 the human, experiment with gesture and movement. Move from 10 towards full physical characterisation of the animal then back again towards human. How might Hedda be compared to a proud cheetah? George a timid rabbit? Use the following questions to explore the outcomes of the exercise:

- What are the animalistic gestures which could be used by an actor to develop the character in the scene?
- How might the movement of the character be influenced by animalistic characteristics?
- How could the vocalisation of this character be shaped by the animalistic characteristics?

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### 4.3 Exploring the symbolism of the pistol – using Berkoff methodologies

The symbolism of the pistol is clearly intended by Ibsen as a key focal point of interest in the guns of her late father has a range of possible meanings. General Gabler is a figure in the back of the play and appears to be an important figure of power. Exploration of both the character of General Gabler and the symbolism of the pistol with reference to the work of the physical theatre practitioner Steven Berkoff.

#### *Steven Berkoff (1937-)*

Berkoff's training as a mime artist and physical theatre practitioner has clearly informed his vision for an ensemble performance style which is based on a series of contradictions and complexities. Trained by the leading physical theatre practitioner Jacques Le Cocq, Berkoff approached the work of a number of classical playwrights including Shakespeare, Kafka and Sophocles to fashion new texts and create unique, stylised choreography to create choric movement pieces which are both highly expressive and expressionistic in style.

Key theatrical elements include the following:

- Mime – Berkoff's physical mime style is designed to appear exaggerated
- Movement – is stylised and choreographed
- Chorus – brought to life using movement and vocal work – provide a dynamic and enhance use of lighting and sound
- Synthesised vocal work – Berkoff's rehearsal process includes developing a unique and exaggerated tone and pitch

Use the above information to help you develop a chorus for the final act. Develop a sequence of movements and images for staging the chorus in order to create a powerful unfolding action.



#### **Practical focus – General Gabler**

Using the information above create a series of still images which represent the relationship with her late father. Add newspaper captions which describe each movement to draw the pictures into a sequence. Now introduce a metronome for the sequence. Try speeding it up or slowing it down in order to explore the control in the text.

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#### 4.4 Hedda's suicide – designing the denouement

Although Loevborg's apparent manslaughter is disappointing to Hedda, it gives her the opportunity to give up on the idea that suicide is a great act of freedom and defiance. The audience is clearly shocked by Hedda's actions both from a religious and a moral perspective. The audience may find her resistance to the prospect of control by a man more



##### Written activity

Annotate the script for references to design elements in this scene. Consider how these elements can be used to create atmosphere and tension. Where available use furniture and set design to create space and levels in the scene. Consider using cardboard and dolls house furniture to create the naturalistic setting.

Now create a plan for the following response:

*As a designer describe your ideas for staging the final moments of the play in relation to the social, cultural and historical context of the original performance.*

Use the following list to help you organise your ideas:

1. Ibsen's scenic requirements – furniture, lights, use of space
2. Limitations of technology in late nineteenth century theatre compared with the use of modern technology and media in a contemporary production
3. The symbolism of the gun shot and its impact on the audience
4. The staging of Hedda's suicide – use of lighting and sound

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## Key Moments from the Text

### 1. Hedda flings Aunt Julie's hat down

- Themes – entrapment and frustration
- Staging Challenge – use of space to indicate the relationships between Hedda and her aunt
- Design – lighting shades used to create the sense of claustrophobia, colour of the hat, style and position of the furniture

### 2. Hedda and Thea discuss the relationship with Loevborg

- Themes – lies and hope
- Staging Challenge – use of chairs/sofa to bring the two women together for communication which can illustrate Hedda's potential contempt for Thea's naivety
- Design – style and colour of furniture, use of gobos and barn door lighting through lighting, use of atmospheric sound

### 3. Hedda reveals that she has the manuscript

- Themes – marital relationships, self-promotion
- Staging Challenge – use of space to illustrate conflicting characters and the extent of Hedda's plan
- Design – arrangement and use of furniture to suggest entrapment, lighting to create intensity, use of costume to suggest lack of sleep

### 4. Hedda passes Loevborg the gun

- Themes – coercion, freedom and control
- Staging Challenge – use of space to suggest Hedda's control and Loevborg's despair
- Design – use of space to enable Hedda to create power and intimacy, lighting to suggest dramatic tension and impending doom

### 5. Hedda realises Brack's agenda for blackmail and the collapse of her marriage and Loevborg's fate

- Themes – hope and despair, control and freedom
- Staging Challenge – use of space to suggest different levels of power between characters
- Design – staging of Hedda's suicide in 'back room', use of lighting to create atmosphere and tension

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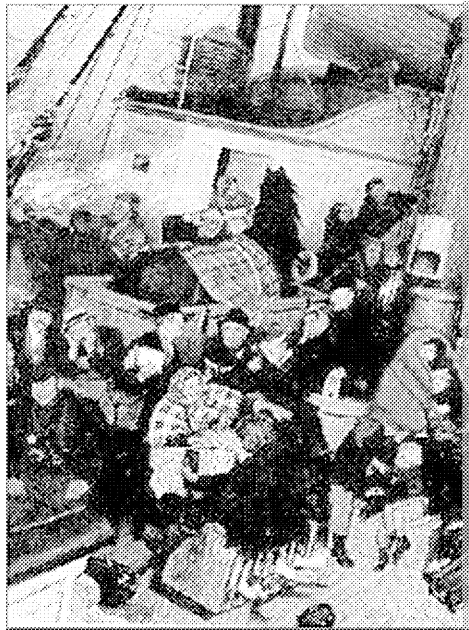




## D. Further Exploration of Co

### 1. Turn of the Century Bourgeois Society

By the end of the nineteenth century modern European society had been shaped by the industrial revolution. Swedish society continued to be divided along here a new group of self-made bourgeois had started to appear in the later decades of the century and were highly prominent in polite and mercantile circles. A movement away from a largely rural economy to an industrialised base also heralded population shifts and saw the development of larger and more sophisticated urban centres. The question of extended suffrage was extensively debated during the last decade of the century although women were excluded from this debate until the early part of the next century (gaining the vote in 1921). Economic and political reform could not, however, keep up with population growth and during the turn of the century Norway experienced mass emigration. Up until the nineteenth century Norway had been a strict Protestant society. By the end of the century becoming more secularised with greater emphasis on personal morality and Compulsory schooling was introduced in 1842 but did not take effect in rural



Artist's impression of late nineteenth century  
'Emigrants' before 1912

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#### Practical focus

Create a social line up for the cast – highest status at one end and lowest at the other. Now by moving the characters into a street scene where they encounter each other as if they were in a play, how do they respond to each other? Use improvisation to suggest the various social relationships. Ask the actors to introduce themselves to the group with a couple of statements which include the following sentence stem: 'I am Eilert Loevborg and I am....'

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## 2. Role of Women in Norwegian Society

Like many European countries Norway operated a patriarchal society. New shape of the country also had been altered by a combination of the Napoleonic wars which took many men into military service and/or urban areas for work. A lot of unmarried women struggled to find the means to support themselves and raising children and motherhood were the only way out of possible penury and isolation. Girls were included in the introduction of compulsory schooling but, in many cases, did not participate until much later. From the 1880s women were engaged in the formation of unions and charitable organisations and these areas of public life appeared new possibilities for women to make their voices heard. In 1899 women became members of public boards and in 1896 Norwegian Association for Votes for Women was founded, moving towards greater equality in society.

The four women in the play represent a range of social roles for women in 19th century Oslo; Thea has been a governess, Berthe a maid, etc. Use the following discussion questions and some notes.



1. What are the social and occupational roles which Hedda, Thea, Berthe and Mrs Alving play? What was life like for them?
2. Who are the women who are referenced but not present in the play and what roles do they play?
3. What would Hedda's life have been like if she had not married George? Use the 'what if' to explore Hedda's alternative reality – put the actor on the hot seat and ask her?

### Challenge Task

How might you tell the story of the play from the point of view of Hedda's death? Write a monologue for one of the characters.

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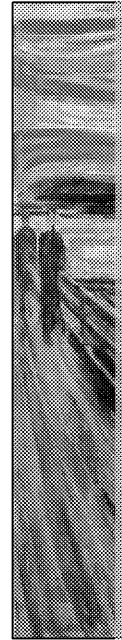


### 3. Artistic and Cultural Life

The figure of the learned man frequently appears in Ibsen's plays partly because of the naturalistic to reflect his society and partly because the intellectual class was a social group created in response to the growth of the universities during the 19th century. The intelligentsia, which George Tesman represents, socialised with members of the class of doctors, bankers and business owners although could not compete with the

In educated Norwegian society the plays of Ibsen, Bjornson, Kielland and Lie reflected the double standards which meant that women were constrained by expectations of home and family. Broad publication and dispersal of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in 1879 across Europe suggests that there was great public interest in the question of the role of women. In novels and plays the question of public immorality was also debated with intense concern about the impact of brothels and alcoholism on marriage, relationships and public health. Loevborg's fate in the play offered a stark reminder of the damaging impact of alcoholism on career and social standing. Elsewhere, issues of mental health and hereditary disease amongst a small and widely distributed population experiencing long and hard winters is reflected in prose and poetry.

In art, the expressionist movement contained a great deal of interest for those who sought a way of representing concern for the mental health of the nation. Edvard Munch's famous picture 'The Scream' is perhaps most emblematic of this style of work.



Edvard Munch

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Explore the paintings and plays of the expressionist movement by conducting research. Try searching for these artists and playwrights:

- Frank Wedekind
- Oscar Kolkocha
- Ivan Goll
- Edvard Munch

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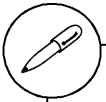


## 4. Military Life

In late nineteenth century Norwegian society, the army was an excellent career option for both working class and aristocracy. The outcome of the Napoleonic war saw Norway ruled by Sweden from 1814. Until 1905 the Norwegian army remained a separate entity within the union with their own uniform, budget and regimental organisation. Norwegian recruits were signed up for 13 years and passed through various stages of service. In the higher ranks Generals such as Hedda's father would have had a strategic as well as operational role including deployment of battalions, planning defence and aggressive actions and campaigns and logistics. Army life for General Gabler would also have included access to cultural and social activities including dinner parties, recitals and wide-ranging education and training.

Hedda's status as the daughter of General Gabler provided her with access to his weapons, collegiate discussions and social events. Her discussion with Loevborg in Act 2 does, however, suggest that this is a world about which Hedda could only create a fragmented picture:

*'Do you really think that a young girl in secret could take the opportunity to that...she's not supposed to know anything about.'*



### Practical focus

Hedda's desire to be 'really alive' is challenged by her decision to marry. Her head and heart seems to come to life in the two scenes between Hedda and Esbjorn.

1. Re-read the scenes in Acts 2 and 3.
2. In a small group create a series of still images which illustrate the relationship between Hedda and her father. Add Loevborg to the final image to additionally reflect his relationship with the General.
3. Use Max Stafford Clark's status card exercises to physicalise the shifting status of the characters by dividing each scene into units and picking a playing card of the same status. The level of status suggested by the playing card should be revealed in performance. Use this exercise to help explore the range of options for movement and dialogue in the scene and the possible impact of growing up in a military household.

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# 6. Developing a Production Concept

## 1. What is a Production Concept?

'Production concept' is a shorthand term for describing the ruling idea or vision of the director and production company and is represented in their stylistic choices. The term 'page to stage' is used to refer to the process by which a company brings a play to performance. In collaboration with their design team, the director selects the methods to create an intended effect on the audience. The specific socio-political context of an audience also produces a set of influences. A contemporary audience is often offended by discussion of themes of sexuality and may also find images of violence shocking. This does not mean that a company would seek to offend or shock. In the context of contemporary society they will be drawing from the world around them and reflecting prevailing fashions. A production concept is likely to include use of the following elements:

- Lighting
- Proxemics or 'blocking' of actors
- Props
- Staging and set design including use of vertical as well as horizontal spaces
- Sound
- Costume and make-up
- Characterisation
- Use of digital technology including recording, video

### A Twenty-first Century Example

Richard Eyre's production of *Hedda Gabler* for the Almeida in 2005 was famous for its fascination for the paradoxical nature of the titular character:

*'Is there any other dramatic heroine who possesses such an extraordinary complexity? Hedda? She's feisty, droll and intelligent, yet fatally ignorant of the world around her. In all this, she mesmerises us and compels our pity'* (Introduction to Nick Hernimans edition)

The production was staged in 2005 and included the following key elements:

- Use of Almeida Theatre's exposed brick walls to suggest the claustrophobic nature of the setting
- Contrast between the austere white panelled walls and the highly polished floor
- Highly buttoned period Victorian dress metaphorically suggesting the repressed nature of the characters
- Eve Best as Hedda playing with Thea's blonde curls as the latter reminds her of her mother, pulling and hints at Hedda's bullying tendencies
- Contrast between Benedict Cumberbatch's lovelorn George and Iain Glen's cold and calculating George
- Use of Saint-Saens' *Danse Macabre* between acts to create an ominous atmosphere

In his review of the production's West End transfer for *The Telegraph* David Gauntlett wrote of Eve Best's performance:

*'There's something intensely modern, and delightfully comical, about the way she inhabits her period surroundings; at the same time, her determination to rule the roost and her discomfort and unhappiness has an atavistic savagery about it.'* (25<sup>th</sup> May 2006)

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Re-read the whole play with a notebook by your side. Now follow the following steps to plan your concept.

**Stage 1:** Before you begin copy the table below into your notebook:

Theme/Idea	Page number/scene	Quote
Example Repression	Act 1, p. 20	Stage Direction – Hedda opens the door and stands in the doorway

**Stage 2:** Once you have completed your initial scrutiny of the text decide what you want to explore in your production. Group ideas together to form a **ruling concept**. E.g. repression and freedom could be explored in your production. Discuss this initial idea with a partner and share some of your thoughts. Decide whether you can add anything. Now condense your ruling concept to the space provided.

**Stage 3:** Consider the style or genre of your production and whether there are any particular influences that will influence your concept. Now complete the following detailed concept plan.

You might also like to start to create a mood board using pictures/photos/words that you have found useful in your research. You might like to use Pinterest to help you.

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Questions to consider	Interpretation WHAT?	Justification WHY?
What will be the style of your production? Expressionistic? Epic? Physical? Naturalistic?		
How will your space be configured? End-on? In the Round? Thrust? Promenade? Use of a balcony or aerial devices?		
Expressionist? Naturalistic? Minimalist? Symbolic? Cinematic?		
Key characters – performance style? Choreography?		
Period? Colours? Fabrics? Style? Important personal props?		
Specific areas of the stage to be lit/defined by light? Colours? Lanterns? Gobos?		
Live/recorded? Percussive/instrumental? Atmospheric? Sound effects?		
Key strapline/image/colours? Mood?		
Use of projection? Music? Live feed?		

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# F. Exploration of Character

## 1. Performer Focus: Hedda

As the eponymous 'anti-heroine' of the play Hedda Gabler is a complex and enigmatic character. The journey of the character through the play is the key tool for the creation of her. In his introduction to the play Richard Eyre cites Ibsen's assertion that 'the Hedda Gabler (rather than 'Hedda Tesman', her husband's name). I intended to infuse her personality she is to be regarded rather as a father's daughter than as her husband's. The tension between her status as an object to be passed between the various men and her destructive desire to define her own identity and thereby create freedom is the focus of the following exercise created by Jacques Le Cocq and later adapted by Trestle. It is a useful means of exploring the rapidly shifting nature of the character. In this exercise an actor explores the potential physical shape of the character at different points in the play.

The seven states of tension are as follows:

State of tension	Description	Episode
1. Catatonic	Expressionless and without movement	Act 4 – when receiving
2. Relaxed	Calm and serene	
3. Neutral	Neither agitated nor relaxed, without definition or speed	
4. Alert	Ready for action, poised, like a taught piece of string	
5. Suspense	On the edge of the chair, anxious	
6. Passion	Full of strong emotion, physically expansive and energetic	
7. Tragic	The grand gesture, the volume turned up very loud	



Review Hedda's journey by completing the above table, adding detail in the 'Episode' column.

**Practical focus:** As a performer now choose two different episodes from the play and explore Hedda's character in a specific state of tension. Make sure that you absorb the characteristics of the specific state of tension. Pay particular attention to facial expression, pace of movement, gesture and vocal work.

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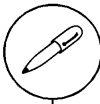
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## 2. Performer Focus: Thea

The character of Thea acts as a foil for Hedda's manipulative nature. Thea is passionate and Hedda simultaneously tortures and soothes her. She is more daring than Hedda and it is clear that Hedda hates her for it. Thea appears to be more concerned with the actions of others rather than telling her own story. As a woman it is clear that her fate is set against Hedda's by agreeing to a loveless marriage which will offer her financial security. Hedda's childlessness is set against Loevborg's creative flourishes and Hedda's approval is a vessel for the disappointment and loss at the heart of the play but, unlike Hedda, she has a sense of hope. The actor playing this character must find a physical and emotional language that expresses Thea's high passions and free spirit. Much of the interest in the character has happened to her before the play begins, in the imagined world of her relationship with Loevborg on the construction of his masterpiece.



### Practical focus

**Flashback:** In the role of Thea think of where the character was a few minutes perhaps a week ago. Working on your own create a tableau with two or three members of the class to step out of the action and walk around the stage commenting on the physical choices being made. Ask the actor to describe what they are doing and why.

**Flash-forward:** Ask the student to think of where their character will be in a few minutes time and perhaps in a year's time. In turn, I would ask them to create a 'past' image to create a tableau which represents the future and the message they want to leave the audience with.

Now stage Thea's first entrance into the play and consider the impact that the character has on movement, gesture and facial expression.

### Challenge Task

Stage the final exchange between George and Thea and their visible movements.

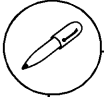
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### 3. Performer Focus: Brack

Hedda initially appears to respect the Judge as he represents male authority. He is also apparently responsible for organising the purchase and furnishing. Hedda has financed the deal by lending money to George's aunt. Despite his upstart attitude, Judge Brack appears to thrive on manipulating people into a state of dependence. Hedda's attraction to Hedda early on in the play and uses the opportunity presented by her father's gun as a suicide weapon to Loevborg, to demand a new level of intimacy. When playing this role will need to take account of the function of the character. Hedda's appearance in town, the potential competition for the role of Puccini, Hedda's death and his recognition of the gun.



#### Practical focus

1. In order to develop and explore the physicality of the character explore the character's body. For example, the pelvis, head and chest. Working as a whole group, the actors should walk around the space using a neutral rhythm and gait. They should then explore how Judge Brack might lead with if he was on his way to the Tesmans' villa. Hedda's air of pomposity and could be considered to be smug in the style with which he walks. Hedda could be a competitor for George's job. This could be represented in the following ways:
  - Facial expression
  - Gestures
  - Body tension
  - Posture
  - Rhythm, pace and tempoThis exercise could be developed by asking the actor to enter the space and perform a part for each of Brack's entrances.
2. Brack is also a character who communicates a great deal through subtext. Hedda's might then lie in the development of a repertoire of non-verbal communication. Hedda's wordless, universal language for the character will be useful when Brack enters the scene. Now try staging the scene by using two chairs to represent George's desk (in the back of the space) and developing the unspoken threat posed by Brack's entrance. Hedda's scene once without words, try adding the single line 'People usually find it hard to change' and observe how this impacts on the dynamics between Hedda and Brack.

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## 4. Performer Focus: Loevborg

Eilert Loevborg is the most enigmatic character in the play. Drawing on his academic who appeared to waste his talent and was the subject of moral outrage in society in Ibsen's *Christiania*, the playwright appears to prompt the audience to see the character on the basis of his unrequited love for Hedda and the weakness of his desire to build a new reputation based on the quality of his writing. The character's physical contrast with George and appears first in the Tesmans' house with a protest that he wishes to 'make myself acceptable'. The character appears to be presenting a challenge for the actor who must generate a sense of the character's presence as well as a shadowy presence in the other two acts of the play.



### Written focus

Consider how you would write about the characterisation of Eilert Loevborg in your stage directions. **If presented with the extract of the play where Eilert is left alone, consider the application of the following performance skills:**

- Physical – movement, gesture, posture and facial expression
- Voice – pace, dialect, inflection, tone, volume

To prepare a written response try grouping the stage directions under one of the following and then work them out as they appear on the page. Consider developing the following:

- To persuade
- To assert
- To explore
- To provide reassurance
- To dismiss
- To express free will

Now create a series of frozen pictures which express the scope of Eilert's emotion in each stage direction. Record these alongside the stage directions under each heading and then plan for a written response based on the characterisation of Eilert in this extract.

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## 5. Performer Focus: George

George Tesman is the least dynamic and perhaps least likeable of Ibsen's characters. He prefers immersion in his academic archives to the reality of complex human relationships. His attraction for both Aunt Juliana and Hedda is based on what they can provide for him. Hedda's beauty and scared by the scale of her emotional responses to situations. The actor playing George lies in the importance of ensuring that he does not

The fact that George ends the play expressing renewed inspiration for working on Eilert's manuscript back together suggests that the better match for him is Hedda. George is almost all reaction with hardly any capacity for action.



### Practical focus

The traditional rehearsal device of the hotseat could be a useful tool for exploring Hedda's revelations of the burning of the manuscript. Try drafting a series of questions for the role.

Once the inner life of the character has been explored, bring the character to life to give him physical definition at different points in the play. For example, the actor's posture with his head in his hands when he listens to Hedda's explanation of why he burned the manuscript in Act 3.

Finally, try to create a soundscape for the character of George – how does he sound in his utterances rather than words? How might these sounds match his vocal delivery?

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# 9. Design

## 1. Set

A key question to consider when designing a set for *Hedda Gabler* is how far you can go in your concept with the play's naturalistic roots. In the original production the designers tried to reproduce the period interior of the Tesmans' villa. In contrast, Rob Howell's 2005 production combined the austere brickwork of the stage area and stairs with polished period furniture.



Will your set design be simple and functional, placing more of a focus on the plot, or will your design be more prominent and significant within your concept? What kind of furniture will you use? Make some initial notes.



Over the last hundred years designers have approached the style and content of a drawing room and study (back of the room) in a range of different ways. What are the key elements of the text:

- French windows which open out onto the garden
- Stove which can be opened
- Sofa
- Table and chairs
- Piano
- Armchair and chair
- Portrait of G. Tesman

The task of the designer is to consider how these items of furniture could be used in the room.



Conduct some research into drawing rooms of the bourgeois at the end of the 19th century. Take some notes on textiles, colours, furniture materials, sources of light, numbers and names of furniture.

Now begin to create a sketch which maps out the use of space. Add colour and texture to your sketch about the colour palette that you want to use.

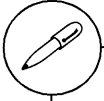
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## 2. Lighting

For the potential lighting designer working on this text the atmospheric quality is a key thought. Not only does the play span an entire day and night with the range of lighting presents for representing the changing light, the dramatic nature of events and the use of colour and angles. As the characters engage in revelations and private moments, there are opportunities to light small areas of the stage to create intimacy and exclusivity.



### Planning a lighting plot

- Blackouts** – At the end of each act, the stage directions specify ‘fade to black’ or ‘blackout’. As a lighting designer, how would you decide if these blackouts could be achieved gradually to blackout or snap to blackout suddenly? What would be the effect of each?
- The lamp** – At the end of Act 4, the stage directions state that the back room is lit by ‘a table lamp’. How could the use of shadow hint at the darkness to come at the end of the act? How could the portable lamp brought in by Berthe be used symbolically to suggest the end of the act?
- Timing** – Work through the play paying particular attention to the changes in lighting. How would you use your text to show how slow or fast these changes might occur and the effect on the audience?

### Subject specific vocabulary for discussing lighting:

- **Spot** Hard-edged effect (coloured filters can be added)
- **Fresnel lantern** Creates softer edge, provides general coverage
- **Birdy** Creates dramatic uplighting when used at the front
- **Gobo** Metal insert which can be used to create patterns on different lanterns

## Symbolism and Lighting

How would you use symbolism and lighting within your concept? How could you use your lights to create mood and atmosphere? What could colours symbolise? For example, could a red wash gradually cross-fade during Episode Act 4, when Hedda is about to commit suicide? Could a steely blue gel be used to create a scene where Hedda learns the truth about Loevborg’s death? When could a blue wash be used?

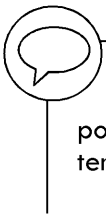
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### 3. Sound

Ibsen's original production would have included only those sounds which are referenced in the text e.g. gun shots, piano playing, people arriving and leaving the Tesmans' villa. In a contemporary production we are able to use sound alongside lighting to create and enhance atmosphere and mood. Depending on the choice of setting for the play it is possible to use a combination of live instrumental and recorded sound. An abstract, more expressionist production might look to digital or synthetic music and sound to draw out the harsh and unforgiving nature of relationships in the play. In a production directed by Ian Rickson the performance artist P J Harvey 'mashed up guitar feedback and played it at the wrong speed', incorporating drones and spooky sounds that recall 'something wrong ... something destabilising ... like radio static or like things breaking down'. Her music opens the play and then appears at intervals across all four acts (*The Guardian*, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2009). The use of an aural theme throughout the production could be very effective in a musical production.



How might the actors use percussion and/or live instruments to create a sound production? Conduct some research into the minimalist music of Steve Reich and explore the potential for using electro-acoustic, discordant arrangements and clashing sounds to create tension.

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### Creating a sound plot

Complete the chart below to capture the key moments and identify potential sound effects

Act/Scene	Description of action	Sound effects
Act 1, Scene 1	Opening of the play – pre-show entrance of Hedda as if arriving at the villa the previous evening followed by real time entrance of Berthe and Miss Tesman	Live musical score premonition
Act 1, Scene 1	Announcement and entrance of Thea	Door bell sound effect Musical score

#### Subject specific vocabulary for discussing sound:

- **Diegetic sound** – live sound or sound implied in real time (door bell, phone)
- **Non-diegetic sound** – recorded sound including voice overs, recorded music
- **Sound effects** – a sound which evokes a particular event e.g. sound of a door

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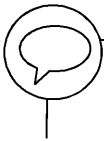
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## 4. Costume and Props

Although the play includes a relatively small number of characters, it is essential that the style of the production enables the actors to communicate a coherent message about each character to the audience. One of the most useful ways of thinking about designing a costume for a character is to create a mood board. The animalisation exercise used to physically shape the character can also be used to suggest costume ideas. For the Royal Exchange production in Manchester in 2001 'the designer neatly contrasted the domestic and restrained bird that is Thea with the exotic bird that is Hedda. It is such an apposite choice to see Thea as this almost domestic bird and indeed, quite without guile, she carries messages about the events in Eilert Loevborg's life to Hedda.' (Peter Rowlands, Resource Pack for the Theatre, 2001.) The men in the play appear either in suits or evening wear whilst the women appear only in clothes for receiving visitors or making calls.



What kind of style and shape might you use to suggest Hedda's entrapment? How might you contrast the clothes worn by Brack with those worn by Geir?



How could costume be used to reinforce the idea of Hedda's dislocation in a male-dominated world she inhabits? How could costume be used to convey her feelings of isolation and self-expression?

Write a paragraph to outline your ideas and consider the following:

- Use of colour for symbolism (does this change throughout?)
- Using costume to create a focal point for a scene
- Use of fabrics to create impact under lighting
- Use of makeup and wigs to complement costume

Now work through the play to identify which props are required for each character. Consider the transition from late Victorian hunting pistols – how heavy and what style might Hedda's costume be?

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# H. Key Practitioners

- using the 'footprint' to develop a product

## 1. Artaud – 1896–1948

Artaud combined the roles of poet, playwright, actor, director, designer, and life. Artaud suffered from mental health problems and addiction. His vision was based on the notion that the divide between performer and audience should be abolished. The audience should be immersed in a 'total' theatre experience. Artaud wrote about the 'Theatre of Cruelty' in a philosophical style reflecting his experiences of working with a range of international surrealist artists. His 'Theatre of Cruelty' combines ritualised, rhythmic movements and sounds repeated to form patterns. The concept of the 'plague' is used to refer to performers should be in a state of delirium, as if suffering from a plague which would affect the audience, like an epidemic.



Consider how the following elements might be used to develop a production of *Hedda Gabler*:

Theatrical element		Where might this element be used in the production (act/scene and/or character)
Sounds	Use of piercing, loud and hypnotic sounds to make the audience feel uncomfortable, surround sound	
Space	The encircled audience: use of swivel chairs for the audience, galleried space for the actors, large non-theatre spaces (e.g. barns)	
Acting	Athletic movement, breathing to express the extremes of the human body, combination of breath, voice and body	
Lighting	Manipulation of angles, moving and flashing lights, distorted shadows, full range of colours	
Costume	Ritualised to reveal the movement of the actor's body	
Props	Symbolic use of puppets and mannequins to provide a range of perspectives for the audience	

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## 2. Complicite – Formed 1983

Theatre de Complicite was formed by the actor-director Simon McBurney and other performers, directors, designers and musicians. The company use devising which is designed to stimulate the senses. The company describe their approach on a collaborative devising process has meant that Complicite has also been known for its visually rich stage language, which layers physically beautiful performance with ensemble work with innovative lighting, sound and video design.’ (www.complicite.com)

The key ideas are as follows:

- Physicality – highly trained actors combine energy with playfulness
- Ensemble or choral working – cohesive working relationships between performers
- Technological innovation – appeal to the senses of the audience using projection, sound amplification, layered sound and live film



Conduct some research into Complicite’s past and current productions. Analyse the key elements to create narrative and imagery. Consider how an approach to the play can be used to bring the play to life.

**Now follow this four-step approach to compose a brief devising plan for the play.**

1. Key images – Identify the five key images in the play and create sketches or pictures.
2. Storytelling – Consider how the audience might be introduced to the characters through movement and/or script.
3. Design – Plan the use of lighting, sound or film to frame the play.
4. Opening and closing – Consider the start and close of the piece – how can you bring the piece?

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### 3. Punchdrunk – Founded 2000

Punchdrunk was formed by the theatre director and designer Felix Barrett. Immersive theatre through installations focused on what the audience feel. Barrett's interest in the design practice of Edward Gordon Craig led Barrett to explore the relationship between actor as narrator or guide and actor as character. The range of different characters is often expressed in the use of masks to create various personas. Over time, the level of experimentation with theatrical spaces has heightened. From a production of *Faust* in a former newspaper printing warehouse in 2006 to a version of *Burial at Sea*, Punchdrunk's 'transformative productions focus as much on the performance space as on the performers and the narrative. Inspired design of buildings and apply a cinematic level of detail to immerse the audience in the world. The company's strapline is as follows:

*'These things are mysteries not to be explained but you will understand when you see them'*  
([www.punchdrunk.org.uk](http://www.punchdrunk.org.uk))

Like the Kneehigh 'Asylum' Punchdrunk are currently creating a 'Village' in a house a series of structures and 'provide a create space to research and develop theatrical elements include the following:

- **The space as a character** – the architecture and shape of the space informs the narrative. Mirroring a contemporary art installation, each part of the space and buildings – spaces, is dressed with artefacts which contribute to the story.
- **Dance based physical theatre** – the possibilities of improvisation lent to Punchdrunk to develop sequences of movement which can be repeated and used as transitions between scenes; in many pieces the performers finish sequences and spectators at different paces to scatter them and move them onto different scenes (to observe different scenes at the same time).
- **Looped narrative** – the company often start with classical text and then use different characters in order to create a series of sub narratives which can be repeated from different character perspectives e.g. Faust's encounter with different figures in a range of different ways depending on which character entered the scene and the audience encountered.
- **Sound and music** – spectators are encouraged to respond to every aspect of the environment including atmospheric music and instrumental sounds, and sound is played at high volume and often looped with recurring motifs so the experience resembles a film soundtrack.



#### Practical focus

Consider how *Hedda Gabler* might be staged in a site-specific space – where to begin? On the Tesmans' honeymoon? With Loevborg and Thea? On the night of the fire? How could you bring to life the various off-text narratives and spaces in the play? Which scenes from the play which could be brought to life using minimal movement and language and how could you develop a two minute devised piece which could be repeated. Work with music and movement.

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## 4. Brecht – 1898–1956

One of the founding fathers of political theatre, Brecht was a German play practitioner whose interest in Marxist politics led him into exile during the 1930s. The development of his ideas about the role of theatre as a tool for encouraging political change, rather than providing simple entertainment led to the formation of the epic theatre style. At the Berliner Ensemble, Brecht was able to develop and articulate his ideas for how to break the fourth wall and force the audience to sit up and examine characters with a critical eye. Brecht was a prolific author and the development of the plays was often a collaborative development of his theatrical methodologies. Key theoretical ideas include:

- **Verfremdungseffekt** (V-effect) – the process of moving a spectator from passive observer of character or situation to active critical consideration of their actions and the social context. The adoption of techniques such as ‘gestus’ (a gesture imbued with a social meaning) and the use of design elements to provide comment on words or actions, the actor’s direct address to the audience directly to the audience.
- **Spass** – use of comedy and satirical performance to enhance the play’s political message. When the ensemble is engaged in multi-roling as actors can replicate the character’s actions with exaggerated physicality.
- **Modelbook** – use of a detailed log book to catalogue the rehearsal process and the development of the design concept; the model book is designed to encourage a clear and concise story-telling arc.
- **Set and props** – Brecht developed the use of the half curtain to ensure that the audience could be seen and actors’ changes of character were clearly understood by the audience. The set is symbolic and minimal.
- **Lighting and sound** – the actors are revealed in harsh white light or very dark shadows. Areas of colour; actors often use instruments to create accompaniment rather than atmospheric accompaniment.



### Written activity

Consider the opportunities for using epic theatre methods to expose the social context of a play. Plan a response to the following question:

*How would you use Brecht’s theatrical methodologies to stage two key scenes from Hedda Gabler?*

Conduct some research on the 2015 Royal Opera house production of one of the plays listed above. Identify the production methods to create epic effects on the audience and how a similar production of Hedda Gabler could be achieved.

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# 1. Production Concepts – drawing from a range of interpretations

## 1. Abbey Theatre, Dublin, 1991

Directed by Deborah Warner with Fiona Shaw as Hedda

In the 1991 production at the Abbey Theatre, Shaw appeared to focus on Hedda's internal conflict by simultaneously holding hands behind her back as if restraining herself from succumbing to her remorse as she picks up Aunt JuJu's discarded hat.

In her first appearance Shaw strode the darkened drawing room beating her fists and kicking the furniture. The darkness in the character was drawn out by the claustrophobic heavy wooden panelled walls.



Research the characterisation of Hedda offered by Fiona Shaw by reading up on her work using these headings:

- Physical skills – movement, gesture, facial expression
- Vocal skills – use of pauses, tone and intonation

## 2. Cambridge Theatre Production, 1970

Directed by Ingmar Bergman with Maggie Smith as Hedda

In this cinematic production directed by the eminent director Ingmar Bergman, Hedda was described by Milton Shulman as 'haunt(ing) the stage like some giant portrait of alabaster skin stretched tight with hidden anguish.' The production was filmed in Sweden and he experienced significant challenges in rehearsal with a production team working before and after the installation of the set. The production was filmed in black flats with small flashes of colour provided by a bright blue velvet chair. Maggie Smith was described by *Time* magazine as 'dissolv(ing) from mood to mood in a sequence in a Bergman film.' Photographs from the production show Maggie Smith's distaste towards her new husband then standing with aloofness with her simultaneous boredom and manipulation of others. Frustrated by the lack of attention to remark 'I wish a woman would review the play, she would understand



Research photos of the 1970 production and consider the potential impact of cinematic stage design on a contemporary audience.

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### 3. Sydney Theatre Company Production, 2006 Directed by Robyn Nevin with Cate Blanchett as Hedda

The presence of movie star Cate Blanchett ensured that a great deal of critical acclaim for this touring production created by the Sydney Theatre Company in 2006. The frenetic pace with Blanchett moving rapidly around the set fluffing cushions and flowers around as if trying to erase them from her sight. The cast alarmed by the constant percussive beat of drumming fingers and rapid sighs but it was the performance that impressed the critics with her vocal and physical range. When Aunt Julia announces Hedda's pregnancy Blanchett clutched her stomach and clapped her hands. As Thea expresses her undying love for Loevborg, Blanchett watched like a hawk. Seated between the two at the formal dining table and raising the tempo as the presence of Brack whilst calling for more drinks to tempt the wayward Loevborg. Blanchett's frenetic energy receded and was replaced by cold sarcasm and her final suicidal gunshot appears the natural reflection of her staccato demeanour.

The production was staged in a semi-thrust style and framed by a series of shutters covered in shutters. The use of profile spot lights through the shutters effectively created the atmosphere in which Hedda finds herself. Blanchett's symbolic removal of the portrait of Loevborg to create sinister shadows around their relationship. The set was replete with patterned wallpaper which carefully reproduced the paradoxical combination of opulence and decay.



Reread Act 3 and the scene between Hedda and Eilert as he returns from his research into the visual imagery of this production and consider the use of a range of design elements in the scene and reflect on the evolving relationship between the two characters.

Imagine you are now directing the same scene, annotate a copy of the scene with your own notes. On the left hand side of the page make notes for the two actors on use of speech and movement. On the right hand side of the page make notes on the use of design elements.

A typical exam question focused on this scene could require you to compare your own production with other productions. Create a plan for a comparative response remembering to include a range of design elements.

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## 4. Elizabeth Robins as Hedda Gabler, 1891

When the feminist writer and actress Elizabeth Robins played Hedda in 1891 the production provided her with a career defining performance. Reflecting on her performance in 1931 Robins commented:

*'Hedda was not all of us, but she was a good many of us...Ibsen's unwritten clue brought me close enough to the "cold-blooded egoist" to feel her warm to my touch; to see Hedda Gabler as pitiable in her hungry loneliness —to see her as tragic.'*

Archival material suggests that Robins focused on the tragic waste latent in the character of a woman in the higher echelons of polite society with few options for realising her potential. Staged in a traditional proscenium style the production was replete with period furniture and props. The prevailing cultural interest in melodrama appears to have framed the production style. In scenes between Hedda and the various male characters there appear to have been a combination of frantic physicality and Comparing this production with the work of the Sydney Theatre Company similarities than differences?



Choose two of the productions offered in this study guide and use the following framework to make notes. Add the elements which are most appropriate to the your research.

Theatrical element	Production 1	Production 2
Staging and set		
Lighting and Sound		
Costume		

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# Appendices

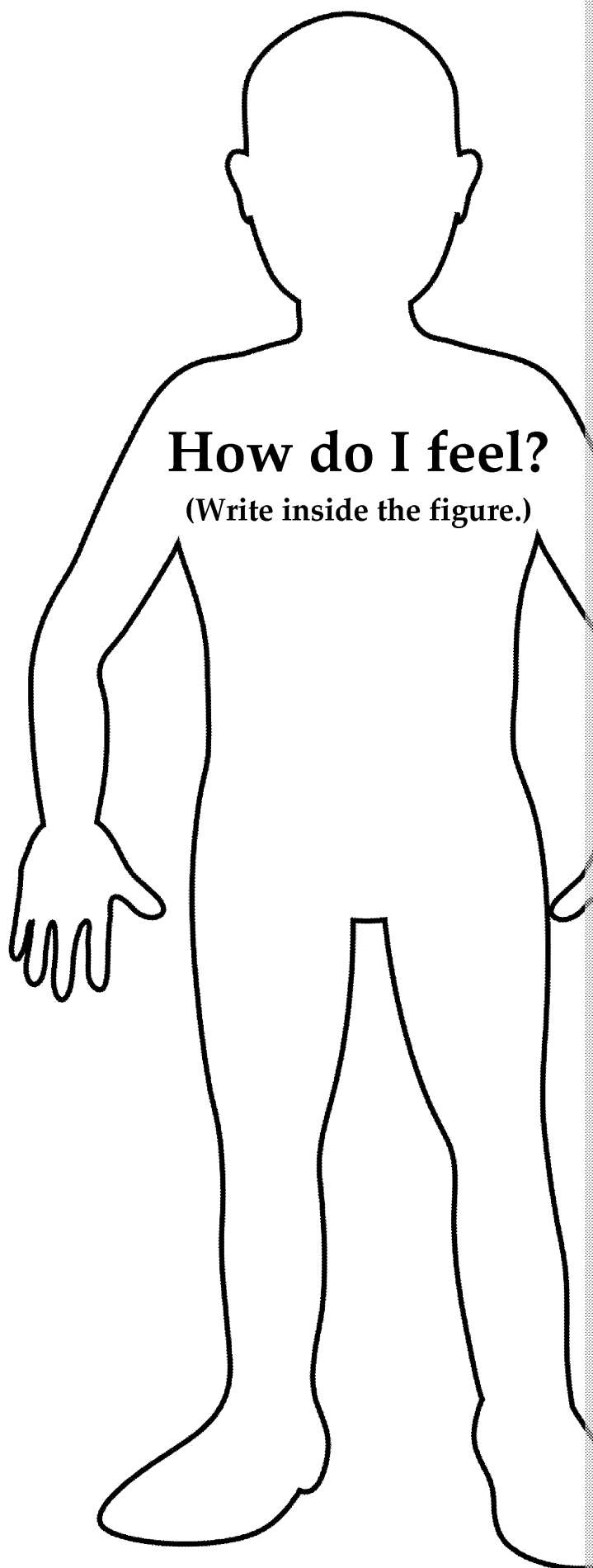
## Appendix 1: Brief Glossary of Dramatic Terms Used

<b>Barn door</b>	Used on a lantern in order to create a particular effect as well as helping to define a specific area
<b>Character</b>	Dramatic persona created by a playwright as a vehicle for the story
<b>Costume</b>	The clothing which dresses the character – determined by the character and the time and place of the play
<b>Box set</b>	A set created for a proscenium arch space which creates the illusion of a fourth wall for the audience
<b>Diegetic sound</b>	Live sound created by musicians
<b>Director</b>	Creates a vision or concept for the production and oversees the production
<b>Door flat</b>	A piece of stage furniture used to create a specific interior and external walls
<b>Fresnel</b>	Type of lantern which creates a sharp shaft of light
<b>Gobo</b>	Metal insert slotted into the front of a lantern to create patterns of light
<b>In the round</b>	Circular staging form
<b>Mask</b>	Constructed out of cardboard or plastic and used to create a particular character
<b>Multimedia</b>	Use of a range of film, digital technology and sound to create imagery and effects
<b>Naturalistic style</b>	An artistic style in which the characteristics of social and natural life are reproduced
<b>Non-diegetic sound</b>	Recorded sound including sound effects
<b>Parcan</b>	Type of lantern used to create a broad wash of light
<b>Physical theatre</b>	Style of theatre which prioritises the body as a means of communication
<b>Practitioner</b>	A theatrical artist who has created a recognisable style
<b>Production</b>	The combination of theatrical methods which create a particular style
<b>Profile spot</b>	A stage lighting effect created when the shape beam is narrowed to create a small circle of light
<b>Prop</b>	Used within a set or by actors to make sense of place and time
<b>Proxemics</b>	This describes the relationships between actors in a scene
<b>Set</b>	The 'world' of the play
<b>Symbolist theatre</b>	Theatre which prioritises the symbolic use of items and repetition of movement sequences to create particular effects on the audience
<b>Theatre maker</b>	Anyone who contributes to the making of the drama
<b>Traverse stage</b>	Staging which has the audience on two sides and the stage in the middle

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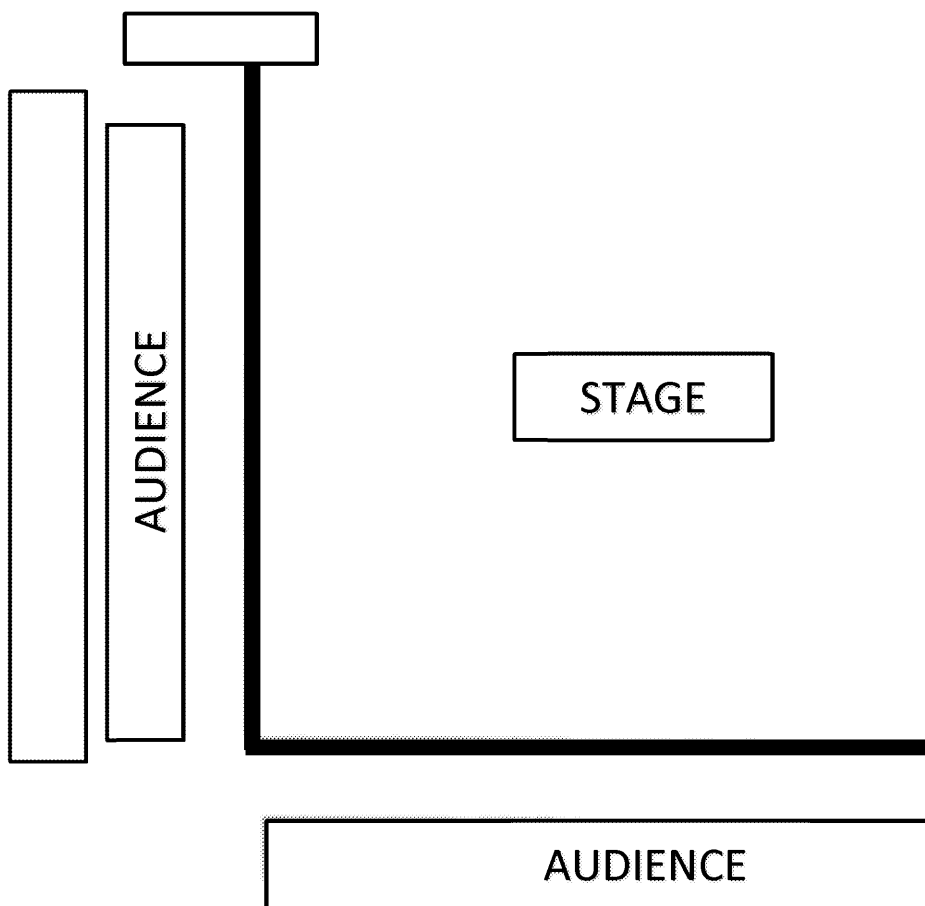


## Appendix 3: Box Set Diagram Template

A ground plan is a diagram designed to show the designers what the stage will look like drawn from a 'bird's eye' perspective i.e. looking down at the stage from above. It uses a set of symbols to show the director and designers what will be in place on the stage and the company plan to avoid sightline blocks as well as helping the actors to know where the scenery and props will be. A good ground plan must have:

- K A Key
- A Audience and Arrows
- V Viability – it has to work
- E Entrances and Exits
- S Symbols, Scale and Staging

You begin by drawing the basic outline of the stage space and then add the details you wish to appear using symbols. Always mark in your audience and all entrances, flats, window flats and walls between rooms. You can also indicate any floor trucks. The diagram below is for an 'end on' or proscenium arch space.



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## Activity 1

Students could use the material presented in the pack or their own research and cover all of the following:

1. Biography:
  - His relationships with women and particularly the young woman with whom he falls in love
  - His experience as a poverty stricken artist – mirroring Eilert Loevborg's situation
  - His experience of living in exile
2. Socio-historical context:
  - Growing urbanisation and changing economic base
  - Development of an 'urban' elite – the educated and professional class
  - Reflection of the new social class system in works of literature and art
3. Limitations for women in a patriarchal society:
  - Limited range of roles for women
  - Growth in political consciousness amongst educated women – emergence of the women's movement
  - Relationship between economics and social class and the impact of poverty

## Activity 7

In this activity students are asked to prepare a response to the following question:

*As an actor how would you **realise** the character of Hedda in performance? Refer specifically to the relationship between Hedda and George in Act 1.*

Indicative content for assessment of this question might include the following points:

- Physical skills – tense posture including rigid shoulders and arms, rapid movements, quick glances at windows contrasted with stillness when observing George and his Aunt; facial expressions ranging from sneering to charming when in the company of Aunt Juju and weary condescension when talking to George
- Vocal skills – pointed comments towards Aunt Juju, light tone when greeting George, rapid pace when referring to George's relationship with his aunt, rapid pace when referring to her and Thea on the sofa
- Use of props – flinging of the hat onto the chair/floor; calling of refreshments for her and Thea on the sofa
- Use of space – maintaining distance from George and his aunt

## Activity 11

In this activity students are asked to respond to the following question:

*As a director or designer, discuss the production methods you would employ in at least two scenes in order to create the feeling of tension that exists in the Tesmans' marriage.*

Indicative content for assessment of a response to the question might include the following points:

- Set – use of door flats to clarify the fact that Hedda never leaves the room, use of wood, panelling, brocade wallpaper, heavy velvet drapes
- Lighting – use of barn doors to create small areas of light around intimate conversations, gel to create a feeling of coldness, gobo to suggest railings on the window
- Costume – tight corset and layers of fabric in Hedda's costume, dark colours for George
- Sound – minimalist soundscape to create a jarring and discordant effect

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### Activity 13

In this activity students are asked to respond to the following question:

*As a performer, discuss how you would develop the role of Judge Brack in the course of the play to illustrate your answer.*

Judge Brack appears in three sections of the play and students might pick from any of the following indicative content for assessment of a response to this question might include the following:

- Physical skills – leading from the chest or chin to suggest power and superiority, a devious sneer when speaking to Hedda, use of hand gestures to suggest his intentions
- Vocal skills – affected tone of social superiority, slow and pointed intonation when speaking to Eilert, laboured use of French, rapid fire punctuation in exchange with Hedda
- Props – papers in inside coat pocket to suggest indebtedness, watch on a chain, a pointed handling of drinks glass in Eilert's presence

### Activity 36

In this activity students are asked to respond to the following question:

*How would you use Brecht's theatrical methodologies to stage two key scenes in the play?*

Response to key practitioners when preparing a concept for production is clearly a key part of preparing to stage the play. Although it is likely that students would be given a framework, it could include the following points:

- Actors on stage throughout – chairs placed at the side or on a balcony above
- Harsh lighting to suggest the reality of the corrupt world of the upper classes
- A more prominent – possibly narrative – role for Berthe the maid, perhaps as a witness
- Musicians on stage or actors using musical instruments
- Performers adopting a gestic style to demonstrate the oppression facing workers, the law and academia and the alienation at the heart of the Tesmans' marriage
- Symbolic costume – use of specific props or personal clothing items to represent the characters

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