

2016 specification
first exams in 2018 (2017 for AS)

Konstantin Stanislavski

A Complete Guide for AS and A Level Edexcel

zigzageducation.co.uk

POD
7727

Follow us on Twitter **@ZigZagDrama**

Publish your own work... Write to a brief...
Register at **publishmenow.co.uk**

Contents

Thank You for Choosing ZigZag Education	ii
Teacher Feedback Opportunity.....	iii
Terms and Conditions of Use	iv
Teacher’s Introduction	1
Assessment Objectives	1
Overview Grid.....	2
Course Outline	3
AS Level.....	3
A Level	3
1: The Life and Times of Konstantin Stanislavski	4
Research Notes.....	5
Consolidation Questions.....	8
Extended Research Activities.....	10
Practical Activities.....	12
2: An Overview of Stanislavski’s Work	14
Research Notes.....	15
Consolidation Questions.....	18
Extended Research Activities.....	19
Practical Activities.....	20
3: Stanislavski’s Artistic Intentions.....	22
Research Notes.....	23
Consolidation Questions.....	25
Extended Research Activities.....	26
Practical Activities.....	29
4: The Innovative Nature of Stanislavski’s Approach	32
Research Notes.....	33
Consolidation Questions.....	35
Extended Research Activities.....	35
Practical Activities.....	36
5: Stanislavski’s Working Methods	37
Research Notes.....	38
Consolidation Questions.....	43
Extended Research Activities.....	44
Practical Activities.....	45
6: The Performance Style and Theatrical Conventions of the System.....	47
Research Notes.....	48
Consolidation Questions.....	50
Extended Research Activities.....	51
Practical Activities.....	52
7: Stanislavski’s Collaboration with Other Practitioners	54
Research Notes.....	55
Consolidation Questions.....	58
Extended Research Activities.....	59
Practical Activities.....	60
8: Stanislavski’s Influence on Other Practitioners.....	63
Research Notes.....	64
Consolidation Questions.....	67
Extended Research Activities.....	68
Practical Activities.....	69
Exam Preparation.....	70
AS Level.....	70
A Level	71
Answers.....	73
Answers 1: The Life and Times of Konstantin Stanislavski	73
Answers 2: An Overview of Stanislavski’s Work	75
Answers 3: Stanislavski’s Artistic Intentions.....	76
Answers 4: The Innovative Nature of Stanislavski’s Approach.....	78
Answers 5: Stanislavski’s Working Methods	79
Answers 6: The Performance Style and Theatrical Conventions of the System	80
Answers 7: Stanislavski’s Collaboration with Other Practitioners.....	81
Answers 8: Stanislavski’s Influence on Other Practitioners.....	82

Teacher's Introduction

This thoroughly researched and clearly written guide to Konstantin Stanislavski fully prepares students for the practitioner elements of Edexcel's Drama and Theatre specifications at both AS (8DR0) and A Level (9DR0).

Each section covers an area of Stanislavski's life, theory and practice. With easily navigable and interestingly presented research notes followed by consolidation questions, the students' understanding of key knowledge is ensured. Extended research activities and practical activities then extend and cement knowledge. All activities are marked to show whether they are individual, paired, group or whole class activities. They are also marked with an indication of the time they should take and whether or not they are suitable as a homework activity. All activities are, however, flexible and can be tailored to suit the needs of your class and students.

Each section also contains exam tips to keep the students thinking about how the information they are gaining can be applied to the appropriate components of their qualification. The final section of this book contains a thorough explanation of how the knowledge is applicable to the specific components and assessment objectives.

Each section is linked to a focus assessment objective. Where there are links to other assessment objectives, these are mentioned in the Exam Tip boxes.

Assessment Objectives

- A01** Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning as part of the theatre-making process, making connections between dramatic theory and practice
- A02** Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance
- A03** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed
- A04** Analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others

September 2017



A web page containing all the links listed in this resource is conveniently provided on ZigZag Education's website at **zzed.uk/7727**

You may find this helpful for accessing the websites rather than typing in each URL.

Free Updates!

Register your email address to receive any future free updates* made to this resource or other Drama resources your school has purchased, and details of any promotions for your subject.

* resulting from minor specification changes, suggestions from teachers and peer reviews, or occasional errors reported by customers

Go to **zzed.uk/freeupdates**

Overview Grid

Chapter
Course outline: Where will you need practitioner knowledge?
The Life and Times of Konstantin Stanislavski AO focus: AO1 A biography of Stanislavski and an account of Russian political and social history events at the time.
An Overview of Stanislavski's Work AO focus: AO3 A broad introduction to the system plus an overview of Stanislavski's key theatrical including key elements of the Moscow Arts Theatre, Stanislavski's Studio Theatre and his written work.
Stanislavski's Artistic Intentions AO focus: AO2 An exploration of the intentions behind Stanislavski's system, including his concept of acting, psychological realism, and subtext.
The Innovative Nature of Stanislavski's Approach AO focus: AO1 An overview of why Stanislavski's work is seen as innovative, which performance techniques led to this, and the experimental and evolving nature of his work.
Stanislavski's Working Methods AO focus: AO3 An explanation of some of the key rehearsal techniques of the system: Action, Motive, Circumstances, Imagination, Units and Objectives, Super-objective and Through-line of Attention and Public Solitude, Emotion Memory, and Tempo-Rhythm.
The Performance Style and Theatrical Conventions of the System AO focus: AO3 An explanation of realism and deeper elements of subtext.
Stanislavski's Collaboration with Other Practitioners AO focus: AO2 An in depth examination of Stanislavski's collaboration with three key figures, Constantin Gordon Craig, Vsevolod Meyerhold and Bertolt Brecht.
Stanislavski's Influence on Other Practitioners AO focus: AO1 A discussion of the influence Stanislavski had at the time and still has now, plus a list of practitioners who followed his methods, including Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler and Sanford Meisner.
Exam Preparation An outline of how you might approach the practitioner components of both AS and A Level exemplar mark schemes and answers.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Course Outline

AS Level

Component 1: Exploration and Performance.

Your practitioner knowledge is assessed in both the performance and portfolio elements of Exploration and Performance.

You are expected to show that you understand:

- That practitioners did not seek to change the way theatre is performed.
- Your text with the origins of how it was originally performed and also through the work of Stanislavski.
- Both the theoretical and practical elements of Stanislavski's system and work.

You are expected to rehearse, perform and analyse.

A Level

Your practitioner knowledge is assessed through both the performance and portfolio elements and the exam question about interpreting a text for a modern audience in Component 2: Study two practitioners.

Component 1: Devising

You are expected to understand:

- How a new piece of theatre can be developed using the ideas, style and conventions of a chosen practitioner.
- How methods developed in a different social, historical and cultural context can be adapted for a modern audience.
- How to apply the methodology of your chosen practitioner to your work.

Component 3: Theatrical Markers in Practice

You need to show that you understand:

- The link between theory and practice.
- The link between performance, theory and social/historical/cultural context.
- The methodology of your chosen practitioner.
- How your chosen practitioner chose to convey meaning.
- Your chosen practitioner's artistic intentions.
- The use of theatrical styles and conventions by your chosen practitioner.
- Your chosen practitioner's collaboration with and influence on other practitioners.
- Your chosen practitioner's theory and practice in terms of relationships with other practitioners.
- How your practitioner influenced the path of drama and theatre.
- How the practitioner's methodologies might influence a performance of your chosen text.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



1: The Life and Times of Konstantin Stanislavski

The first section of this study pack gives you an outline of the life of Stanislavski, as well as the wider social, historical, and cultural context within which he lived and worked. The activities help you to explore the life and times of Stanislavski and how these external factors may have influenced his work. There are also activities for choosing which specific sections of the exam this information will help you to explore.



This study pack is divided as follows:

- 1) Research notes on the social, historical, and cultural context of Stanislavski.
- 2) Consolidation questions to cement the knowledge you have gained from reading the research notes.
- 3) Extended research activities to encourage further research into Stanislavski.
- 4) Practical activities to enable you to further explore the life and times of Stanislavski.

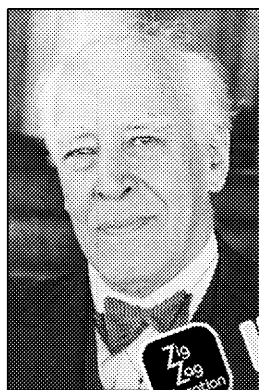
The focus AO for this section is: AO1 'Making connections between theory and practice'

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



The Life and Times of Konstantin Stanislavski: Research Notes



Often considered the father of modern theatre, **Konstantin Stanislavski** was **creating an acting system** which enables actors to create characters whose emotions and actions their audiences could believe.

Stanislavski was **born in January 1863**. The 5th January and date of birth due to the change from the Julian Calendar (used in Russia) to the Gregorian calendar (15th January) which Russia moved to in 1918.

Stanislavski's given name was **Konstantin Sergeievich Alexeevich**. He was born into one of the richest families in Russia. His father, Sergei Alekseev, was a doctor and his mother, Elisaveta Vasilevna, was French-Russian. Stanislavski was the youngest of five children.

Theatre was in Stanislavski's blood. His maternal **grandmother had been an actress**. Stanislavski's father loved theatre and to entertain his friends and family he turned his house into a theatre. They also created a theatre in their town house in later years. (Yes, Stanislavski was a theatre man from birth.)

As a young person, **Stanislavski took part in amateur theatre**. He also **studied business and language** at a prestigious private school. He didn't complete his studies, however, instead travelling to Europe and joining the family business. During the 1880s, **he was a successful businessman**.

While working, Stanislavski kept up his passion for acting. In **1884, he adopted the stage name Stanislavski** to keep his acting separate from his family. He **enrolled in the Moscow Theatre School** in 1885, but he did not find it gave him what he wanted, so he left in a matter of weeks. He chose instead to watch and study international performances at **The Maly Theatre**, which he called his 'theatrical university'. Although mostly he found the actors' performances to be less than what he should not do, rather than what he should do.

Exam Tip

Know the difference between Stanislavski and Chekhov. Stanislavski was a realist, Chekhov was a symbolist. Stanislavski was a realist, Chekhov was a symbolist. Stanislavski was a realist, Chekhov was a symbolist. In your answer, make that clear.

Theatre

When Stanislavski began acting, Russian theatre was in decline. Theatres were run by private owners rather than state-run. Stanislavski felt that this meant making money had become more important than the art itself. The dominant theatre style of the time was melodrama, which as melodrama borrowed heavily from the over-stylised conventions, with artificial movements such as a hand on heart to signify love, or across forehead to signify grief. Stanislavski felt that many decisions on costume, set and movement were made for show rather than because that is what was always done rather than to bring any meaning or realism to the world of theatre. He also complained that the actors didn't learn lines, but relied on prompts to fill in lines they didn't know.

In **1888, Stanislavski began the Society of Art and Literature** with a group of friends. The ideas were the basis for the **Moscow Art Theatre (MAT)** which he **established in 1898 with Nemirovich-Danchenko**. The MAT was known for its truthful, believable and detailed performances; actors alternating between large and small roles; costume and set created with purpose and detail; professionalism and high standards. The MAT was also known to reach new and working class audiences and to use theatre to educate and enlighten.

This was the beginning of **Stanislavski's work towards Russian realism**. He worked with actors including **Gorki and Chekhov** (whose death in 1904 left Stanislavski grief stricken), and **actress Maria Lilina in 1889** after they had performed, and **had three children**; the youngest was born in 1891, three months old.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



In 1904–1905, Stanislavski experimented with symbolic theatre. He **created the Meyerhold** but it failed due to audience disinterest and the **revolution of 1905**.

Russia pre-1905 revolution

Serfdom (where workers are tied to the land and have no rights) was abolished in 1861, but there was still a massive difference between the rich and the poor and a peasant underclass whose work supported the life and position of the rich.

Work and conditions for the peasants and industrial workers were poor and trade unions were illegal.

There was a sense of injustice because you could not rise through the hierarchy system. There was also great anger at the autocracy which governed Russia. Several violent and terrorist organisations were trying to bring about political change.

Russia was fighting the very unpopular and unsuccessful Russo-Japanese War at the time of the revolution.

Russia post-1905

The revolution was not what was hoped for. The aims were not achieved, especially in the East where peaceful demonstrations were common.

It did, however, force the autocracy to constitute a constitution. In addition to the King, the government (Duma).

The Duma was formed with universal male suffrage. Peasants, tradesmen and workers had their own representatives. It did not agree with the autocracy and re-elections took place. This happened several times.

All this paved the way for the revolution in 1917.

In 1906, the company went on an international tour, to great acclaim. It was the **planning and writing for his works, that would later become his system** for acting.

From 1907, Stanislavski continued to develop his system with mixed success. At times, it led to turbulence (including being sacked from one performance) and at others it led to critically acclaimed work. Stanislavski met and worked with the British theatre practitioner, Edward Gordon Craig, from 1908–1910.

Exam Tip

How is political/social context important to Stanislavski's ideas? How can he achieve? the social contexts that shape his work? (AS component 1 p. 1 and 3 p. 13 and p. 14)

In 1912, he set up his first studio. He set up his second studio in 1916. He used his studio to develop his system for acting and to explore symbolism. There are also many drawings and photographs that show the development of his system intended as a manual for actors.

At the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Stanislavski was in Germany, studying the theatre and thought he would be assassinated, but he was returned to Russia.

The second Russian revolution occurred in 1917, bringing massive social and political change. The revolution was **sympathetic to the new order**, despite the fact that his finances were affected when the theatre was nationalised. The MAT was endorsed by Lenin. It became state funded and began to attract a large audience.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



The second revolution

This revolution was two revolutions with months of each other. The first was the fall of the old government and the second was the rise of the new wing, socialist Bolsheviks in power.

There was a sense of crisis at government policy. Russia had suffered catastrophe in World War I with a huge loss of life and a huge financial cost, leaving food shortages. Riots forced the abdication of Tsar Nicolas II. A provisional government was replaced after a coup, by a government made up of Bolsheviks including Trotsky. Each region also had its own council of workers and peasants or soviets.

State funding was withdrawn from the MAT in 1921, so the company undertook a tour. They toured to great critical (if not financial) acclaim until 1924. During that time, Stanislavski wrote an **autobiography** for a US publisher. Stanislavski also worked with US actors, including Lee Strasberg, to develop method acting, popular with many famous Hollywood actors.

When he returned to Russia, Stanislavski led the MAT for two successful years. The productions focused on the emotion and reality of the characters.

The MAT continued performing, adapting classics to be relevant to modern audiences. Stanislavski's last performance was in **October 1928**, when Stanislavski suffered a massive heart attack. He died at the end of the performance when he collapsed.



He survived the heart attack. He focused on writing his memoirs, directing and teaching. Most of his work was conducted in Russia. Many intellectuals, Stanislavski was by this time considered a leading figure. He was lucky to be interred in his own house, escaping execution. Many other internationally connected Russians and emigrants were executed.

Soviet Russia and Joseph Stalin

Russia was turbulent under Soviet Rule with infighting among the ruling party and with neighbouring states. Stalin rose to power by suppressing criticism of the party. Once in power, he effectively became a dictator. He and his supporters introduced large-scale repression, torture, forced labour, exile and execution of anyone who opposed the party.

Stanislavski died on **7th August 1938**. The marriage destroyed his heir, Vsevolod Meyerhold, who was executed by police in 1940.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



The Life and Times of Konstantin Stanislavski: Consolidation Questions

Activity One: What Have You Learnt?

i	Individual	45 mins–1 hour	No extra resources
----------	------------	----------------	--------------------

Read Information Sheet 1 and use the notes to answer the questions below:

- 1) What 10 moments in Stanislavski's life do you think were most influential in his development as a practitioner? Create a timeline of those events explaining in what ways you think they were influential. (See timeline template on page 10.)
- 2) List the elements of his work that Stanislavski was unhappy with when he first started, and then his own work.



- 3) Much changed in Russia during Stanislavski's lifetime. Complete the table below showing how Russia was like at the time of Stanislavski's birth and then at his death.

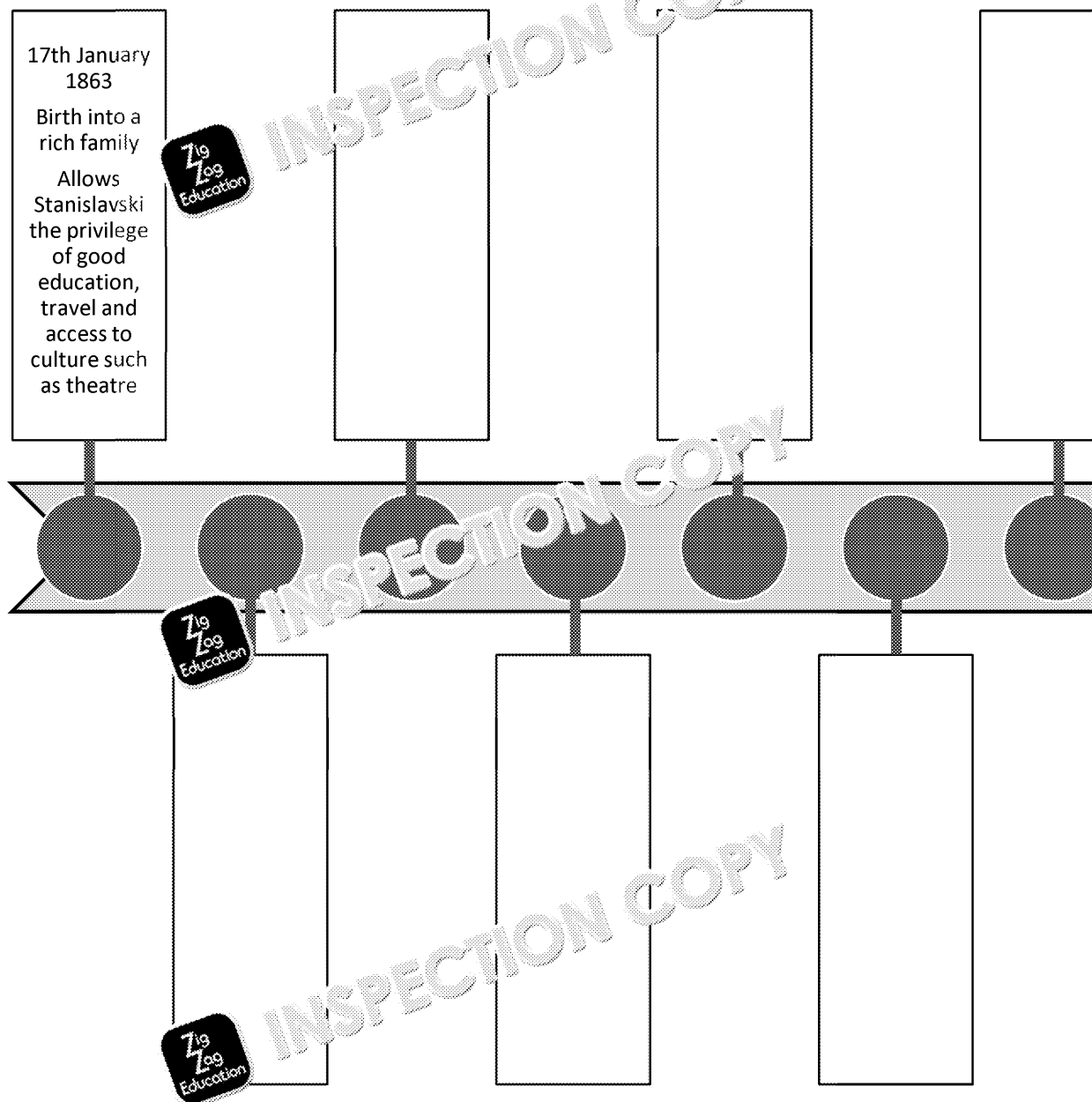
Russia: at Stanislavski's birth	Russia: at his death

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Timeline Worksheet



INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED





INSPECTION COPY

i	Group → whole class	1–2 hours	
----------	---------------------	-----------	--

Serfdom is something that seems very far removed in British history, as probably Britain became a free country after the peasants revolt in 1381. Although it survived for much longer, it was officially abolished in Britain by Elizabeth I in 1574; nearly 300 years before it was

- the life of a peasant in Russia between 1861–1905
- the life of a tradesman in Russia between 1861–1905
- the life of a noble in Russia between 1861–1905

 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zwxv34j/revision>

 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serfdom_in_Russia#Slaves_and_serfs

- <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/best-infographics-2015#sm.00001vhxxh>
- <https://www.columnfivemedia.com/9-infographic-examples-that-will-convert/>
- <https://designschool.canva.com/blog/best-infographics/>

Part two: In the following lesson, your groups will present their infographics to the class. While listening to the presentations of your peers, make notes about any elements that you think are particularly effective or interesting. You will then discuss these elements with your group and decide on a theatre to educate and enlighten.

[illegible]

ee: Class discussion

in what ways may the class structure of Stanislavski was growing up, have affected influenced his wish to create theatre which and enlightened and reached a broader audience

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Activity Two: What is Melodrama?

i	Individual	45 mins–1 hour	No extra resources
---	------------	----------------	--------------------

Stanislavski was unhappy with the theatre with which he grew up. Much melodrama and used the conventions of melodrama. This is not a style of very familiar in modern theatre, whereas the realism of Stanislavskian style is more common. To understand Stanislavski's new style, it is first important to see he was pushing against.

Part one: Research melodrama and make a list of at least 8–10 points which explain it as a theatrical style.

Elements of melodrama	

Part two: Where do you see elements of melodrama living on in current stage, film or TV?

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



The Life and Times of Konstantin Stanislavski: Practical Activities

Stanislavski's approach to theatre was in direct opposition to the dominant view of the time. While Stanislavski wanted art to be realistic and to reflect life, the melodramatic and over-dramatised parody of reality. Modern theatre and TV is, in the main, a continuation of Stanislavskian ideas, that it can be difficult for us to imagine how acting was in the past. Stanislavski was just starting out.

The activities below are designed to help you understand how the theatre looked, what was considered good acting and what elements of stylisation were used.

Activity 0 Declaim a Speech

i	Individual → class	10 mins prep + 5 mins per performance
----------	--------------------	---------------------------------------

When Stanislavski first began acting, theatre was often melodramatic with actors declaiming famous speeches. This activity is based on a famous speech by Puck from the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and declaiming the theatricality of your voice.

Work individually on this task for 10 minutes. The class will then come back together and perform their speeches using the score card below.

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended—
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend
If you pardon, we will mend.
And, as I am a Puck,
If we have earned your luck,
Now to undo the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long.
Else the Puck a liar call.
So good night unto you all.
Give me your hands if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V, Scene i

Declaim a speech: Score card	
Volume	/10
Clarity of words	/10
Emphasis on rhyme	/10
Realistic characterisation	/10
Clarity of rhythm	/10
Enjoyment	/10

To declaim
To express
strong feelings
voice or words

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



¹ <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

Activity Two: Stock Emotions

i

Individual → pairs → class

15 minutes

- a. **2–3 minutes** Individually: Come up with a stock action to represent each of these emotions:
- Love
 - Anger
 - Jealousy
 - Fear
 - Sadness
- b. **2–3 minutes** In pairs: Once you have come up with an action in an emotion, pair up with someone else and show them.
- c. **5 minutes** In pairs: Discuss the following with your partner: Were the actions similar? Why do you think this happened? At what level are these actions culturally dictated? How honest/real do you think these actions are?
- d. **5 minutes** Whole class: Come back together as a class and feedback your ideas to the class. Do you all agree or are there other ideas?



INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



2: An Overview of Stanislavski

This section of the study pack gives you an outline of the main body of Stanislavski's work, plus a closer focus on key moments and aspects of how that work developed. The activities help you to understand Stanislavski's work in the theatre and his journey of development. There are also tips showing which specific sections of the exam this information will help you to explore.

This section is divided as follows:

- 1) Research notes on Stanislavski's work.
- 2) Application questions to cement the knowledge you have gained from the research notes.
- 3) Extended research activities to encourage further research into Stanislavski's work.
- 4) Practical activities to enable you to further explore his work.

The focus AO for this section is: AO3 '...understanding of how drama and theatre is developed'.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



An Overview of Stanislavski's Work: Research Notes

In his book *Stanislavski: An Introduction* Jean Benedetti suggests that 'if Stanislavski had "been a 'natural', ... there would be no System"². Had Stanislavski found acting easy, or had his time at drama school furnished him with the answers he desired, perhaps he would not have felt the need to document his work, nor to unpick the processes by which he and other actors created characters. Therefore, he would never have created what we know today as his system for training actors.

Stanislavski's system is based on his desire to become the best actor he could be and to enable others to do the same. He was often frustrated by the ability of others to tell him what the desired outcome was, but not to be able to give him instructions on how to achieve this. Creating a system which enabled him, and actors he worked with, to get to the desired outcome through a clear and systematic approach was his desire. His focus was on the external elements of the actor and the text, to create a character that was truthful to the audience and the actor playing the role.

His vision of what truth was, however, was not merely to reproduce exactly reality, but to be truthful. The truth presented on stage could use any theatrical conventions, but it had to be believable. Stanislavski wanted to create a believable truth for the audience.

Stanislavski's research was based on detailed observation and reading of psychology. However, in its infancy when Stanislavski began his studies, there was not a huge amount of psychological research. Therefore, he read what he could and tried to apply it to the detailed observation of other people's acting. It is from this study that Stanislavski began to think of psychology as an integral part of an actor's path to great characterisation.

Stanislavski was an experimental and forward looking theatre practitioner. In the previous section, we saw that Stanislavski was unhappy with the theatre of the time. He felt it was not genuine. He wanted to create a style of acting that had a sense of truth. This was another driving factor behind his work.

Stanislavski had a **desire not to stagnate or become mechanistic** in his approach to work. This was true of his acting where he always challenged himself to improve, and of the development of his system. It may also be why only one of the books he planned for his system was published during his lifetime (*An Actor Prepares*): **while he was alive, his ideas were always evolving and his system could not be truly finished.** Even when he died, he was planning a production to show how his system could be applied to any style of theatre.

The

A truthful

Internal
actions



Exam Tip

How might you develop your portfolio practice in social, historical context and adapted and audience (AS component)

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



² *Stanislavski: An Introduction*, Benedetti, J (Methuen, 1982), p. 11

³ *Stanislavski's Legacy*, Stanislavski, K (Methuen, 1981), p. 20

Stanislavski's Key Books

My Life in Art (MLIA): Autobiography; commissioned and published in US Russia 1926.

An Actor Prepares (AAP): The first book about the system; intended as the first in English in 1936; his widow received an advanced copy of the Russian version after Stanislavski died.

Building a Character (BAC): The second book on the system; intended as the third part of the system; death and WWII delayed the publication; first published in English in 1949.

Creating a Role (CAR): The third and last book forming the system; published in Russia and the USA in 1961.

Stanislavski's Legacy: Published in the USA in 1958; contains articles and drafts by Stanislavski.

There are notable differences between the edition of AAP published in America and the Russian edition. The Russian version contained redrafts and appendices that Stanislavski added after the publication of the American version. There were even more differences between the Russian versions of *Building a Character*, the Russian version having been edited by Stanislavski's widow after his death, reflecting the political situation of the country at the time of publication.

There was confusion when AAP was published in America. Whereas in Russia, the volume one of the full work, with *Building a Character* as volume two, this was the American version. Along with the length of time until BAC was published, this led to AAP being seen as a complete system. Even when BAC was published, ideas contained in AAP were considered more important than those in BAC when in fact, Stanislavski had intended them to be read in sequence.

Stanislavski wrote AAP as fiction and BAC and CAR in the same format. Through *Kostya, a young actor, tells of his experience in learning 'the system' with the fictional director Vsevolod Meyerhold*, this allowed Stanislavski to show the system from the perspective of both an actor and a director. It also allowed both the young actor and the experienced director reflecting on those ideas. It also allowed Stanislavski to write in a practical way rather than as an academic. It enabled him to publish ideas he couldn't fit with the political situation of Russia; the ideas were that of a fictional young actor, Kostya, not Stanislavski himself.

It is not reading and writing, that make up Stanislavski's influential body of work, but his directing is part of the legacy, as are the theatres, studios and ensembles he set up.

Stanislavski's Theatres

- 1877: Stanislavski's father turns a wing of their country house into a theatre.
- 1888: Stanislavski founds the Society of Art and Literature which included an ensemble and drama and music schools.
- 1898: Established the Moscow Arts Theatre (MAT) with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko.
- 1905: Founded the Theatre Studio and put Vsevolod Meyerhold in charge.
- 1912: Created the First Studio.
- 1916: Created the Second Studio.
- 1918: Created the Opera Studio.
- 1935: Set up his Opera-Dramatic Studio to be a legacy.

The Society of Art and Literature was where Stanislavski first began to develop his system. It was a group of talented actors and artists, including Stanislavski, Glikeriya Fedotova, and others, who were both highly influential in Stanislavski's development as an actor.

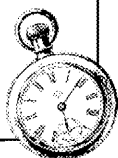
COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



The ideas he developed with The Society were then developed in the **Moscow Art up with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko**, a successful playwright. Although in la theatre in the same way and rifts began to appear in their relationship, at the beg same things: **to create a genuine ensemble with no stars or constant lead actors, were original, with costume and set design being specific to each performance, the actors; the audience was not to be distracted by the theatre building, orches or go backstage.**

Exam Tip

Stanislavski saw the theatre as a tool for enlightening. What is it that you may want to achieve with your audience. 'make connections between the chosen performance and their intended aims and objectives' (A Level component 1 p. 17)



Perhaps most importantly, the attract a different kind of audi fashionable theatre going mid theatre open to all. The amou performances would have had perform for the workers was p MAT still retained its ideology enlighten despite the more tra

As the MAT developed, so its style became more ingrained and **Stanislavski began another outlet for the more experimental areas of theatre and the development** the more established actors were unwilling to use without a great degree of bribe that he began to work with his studios.

The Studio Theatre was the first of these experiments and unfortunately, despite overall a failure. The First Studio was focused on the physiological areas of self-di into his system and, in particular, on improvisation. Many of the young actors w playwright Anton Chekhov's nephew, Michael Chekhov, went on to have great inf

The Second Studio was where Stanislavski worked on the specifically on the teach a lot of the work he did here is detailed in his books. His final studio was **the Op intended to train actors in the system**. Stanislavski himself taught there, as did o trained in the system. It is what is seen as the most complete version of the s



**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**




An Overview of Stanislavski's Work: Consolidation Questions

Activity One: What Have You Learnt?

i	Individual	45 mins–1 hour	No extra resources
----------	------------	----------------	--------------------


- 1) Make a list of the books Stanislavski wrote and when they were published. Note any differences in the timing of publication before and after his death. Also, what effect do you think the timing of publishing in Russia and the USA had on the text and how it was received?

Book	Date published in USA	Date published in Russia	Pre/post death publication?
			


- 2) What were the names of the fictional actor and director Stanislavski first created in *Prepares* and why did he choose to create a fictional character?

Name 1:

Name 2:

Why: 

- 3) Which theatres and studios did Stanislavski set up and what was the aim of each?

Name	
	

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



An Overview of Stanislavski's Work: Extended Research Activity

Activity One: The Seagull

i	Individual	45 mins–1 hour	Access to Internet
----------	------------	----------------	--------------------

In its first year, the Moscow Arts Theatre put on several plays but the one which was its production of *The Seagull*, by Anton Chekhov.

You are going to research the MAT's production of *The Seagull* by Anton Chekhov using the following weblinks to help you:

- <http://www.seagulltheplay.com/>
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/health/2006/06/060624_seagull.shtml
- <http://www.seagulltheplay.com/performance-history-of-seagull-play-reviews>
- <http://www.sparknotes.com/drama/seagull/context.html>

Complete the following table with your findings:

<i>The Seagull</i> by Anton Chekhov	
What is the play about?	
When was the play first performed and how was it received?	
What was different about the MAT production of <i>The Seagull</i> ?	
Any other interesting facts about the MAT production of <i>The Seagull</i> ?	

Activity Two: Short Essay

i	Individual	20–30 minutes	No extra resources
----------	------------	---------------	--------------------

Stanislavski created the system to be a method for training actors. He made it into and a component of this system, his life's work. He used elements of his life throughout his life in the theatre as an actor, a director, a theatre founder.

Write a short essay (200–300 words) which answers the following question:

- Jean Benedetti said 'if Stanislavski had "been a 'natural', ... there would be no need for his system. Do you think this might be true?

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



An Overview of Stanislavski's Work: Practical Activities

Activity One: Actor and Director

i	Pairs + performance	30 minutes
----------	---------------------	------------

Stanislavski was both an actor and director, and his books are written to explore how to create two performances of the mini-script below, each taking the role of a different character in the performances. You will perform both pieces to your teacher and fellow students.

At the end of the rehearsal and performance, discuss your feelings at the following stages as director:

- 1) At the beginning, before any decisions have been made about how the performance will be created.
- 2) During the rehearsal process.
- 3) During the performance.

Was there a difference between your feelings as actor and director? Which section was the most stressful/more exciting, etc. as each role?

Mini-script (2)

Character 1 has lost his/her wedding ring and is looking for it.

Character 1: Come on, come on. It must be here somewhere. [pause] When did I lose it? Think. [sighs] Don't give up. It must be here. [Looks distraught]. It must. [Sits down]

Activity Two: Translation

i	Class	30 minutes
----------	-------	------------

It is important to remember that what we read today, in English, as written by Stanislavski, has been translated. Many of his books were also put together after his death and were created in complete books for him by Stanislavski himself. All this has to be borne in mind when we discuss his books and the information they give us about his theatre practice. The political climate and the time in which he was writing and we have to realise that his work has been read many times and by many people.

The activity below is a whole class activity to enable you to consider the effect of translation as it is passed through many people.

Divide your class into two groups, your task in each group is to transfer an idea from the first to the last person and then to explore how the idea changed on its journey and compare the similarities and differences between the outcome for each group.

- 1) One person (A) from each group is given the text (overleaf) to read. They are given 2 minutes. They must not read aloud or show any other group members.
- 2) The text is then taken away by the teacher.
- 3) The rest of the class must go outside the room, leaving only the reader (A) in the room. Each group (B) then returns to the room. A must then tell B what they considered the most important elements of the text.
- 4) The next member of each group (C) then returns to the room and (B) must tell C what they considered the most important. Next (C) will tell (D) and so on until the information has been passed to the last person in each group.
- 5) At the end, the final member of the group must write down what they were told and compare it to the original document and also compare across the group: Which elements were forgotten? What was forgotten or left out? What does this tell you about the process of communication? Imagine you had a particular bias that meant you didn't pass on everything, how would this change your translation?

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Text for use with Practical Activities 2: Activity T

Instructions for making a proper cup of tea

Below you will find the instructions for making a traditional English cup served with afternoon tea in my house. The kind which comes with school. The kind which needs a particular type of etiquette in order to be properly served. The etiquette which is, in my humble opinion, dying out.

Firstly we must consider the necessary equipment. You will need to ensure a satisfactory size for the tea for the number of guests you are serving. It should contain a fine mesh or integral filter, or you will also need a tea strainer. Not the common tea bag for our sumptuous brew.

You will need a kettle, preferably one which can be boiled on the hob as we will need boiling water to pour onto the leaves, not just boiled as in electric kettles which seem to switch off at the point just before you need it.

You will need a fine bone china cup and saucer. Do not be tempted by the common and the tea will not taste as elegant as it should, slurped from the cup.

You will need a teaspoon, milk, sugar lumps if you desire sweetened tea and patience.

Firstly you must put your water into the kettle to boil. Once the kettle is boiling, you should prepare your pot. The pot must be warmed with a little water, which should be poured into the pot, swilled around and poured out. This is better tea.

Into your warmed pot you need to place one teaspoon of fine leaf tea per person plus one for the pot. When the water is boiling, remove the kettle from the heat and pour the water straight into the pot. Replace the lid of the teapot and wait between three and eight minutes depending on the tea you have chosen. Your brew is ready. Halfway through the brewing process you should turn the pot and mix the tea without the need for stirring.

Once the tea is brewed to the desired strength, you can pour it into the cups with sugar lumps as desired and enjoy.



INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



3: Stanislavski's Artistic Intentions

This section will help you to understand the overriding artistic intentions of Stanislavski. It will give you information about the goals he was aiming for in his work and the creation of the system.

This section is divided as follows:

- 1) Research notes on Stanislavski's artistic intentions.
- 2) Consolidation questions to cement the knowledge you have gained from reading the research notes.
- 3) Guided research activities to encourage further research on Stanislavski's artistic intentions.
- 4) Practical activities to enable you to further explore his artistic intentions.

The focus AO for this section is: AO2 An introduction to how to apply 'theatrical skills to realise artistic intention'.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Stanislavski's Artistic Intentions: Research Notes

Overall, Stanislavski's intention was **to create a system that could be used to train actors to bring a truth and an honesty to the stage**. They should experience things that they could feel from this the audience will watch a believable and real performance. For Stanislavski, **bringing learning** and this educating element of the theatre is something that he valued.

In his notes, Stanislavski often talked about **a grammar for acting**. From early in his career, he kept detailed notes on his own work and on his observations of other actors. In these notes, he wrote of brilliance and creativity and yet at the same time, most accomplished actors seemed unimpressive. These moments arose. He felt that **achieving great artistic moments on stage by accident** was not enough. He wanted to enable actors to create these moments wilfully. He wanted a set of rules, that he called **a set of guidelines which help to create, shape and clarify** the actor's work. His system would not create perfect acting and that the imagination, creativity and the director would be paramount, but he wanted his system to be the framework within which they could work.

Stanislavski felt that acting well and the use of the system should be a way of life rather than a one off. In *Building a Character*, the character of Tortsov says, 'Much of that you hear in this school will be fully understood by you, only after many years'⁴.

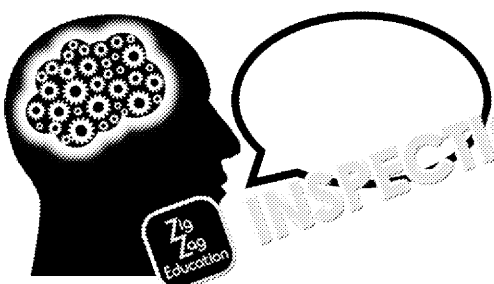
In *My Life in Art* he said the system was not something that could necessarily be learned as a whole and that it may have to be learned in parts.

*'If each of them has to be worked on separately, systematically, by a whole range of exercises so be it!'*⁵

This is therefore at the heart of the system, a mode of character exploration through practical experience, hard work and creativity, enables an actor to create what Stanislavski called a 'truthful representation of life'.

It is this idea of 'truthful representation' which Stanislavski saw as so important that can, however, be seen in his work. **Stanislavski's work is tied up with the Realist movement of the late nineteenth century.** This was a fashion for creating drama which reflected and recreated real life on stage, moving away from the declamatory style of theatre which had existed previously. Stanislavski made his system and his early work within theatre. **He considered his early work to be not a reproduction of real life on stage. His system, by contrast dealt in what he called 'scenic truth'**⁶. He felt that merely reproducing life was not interesting or educational. Instead, he felt actors should be so in tune with their characters that their actions on stage were natural; that they behaved as if they were the characters. If the actor believed the character, then the audience would, too.

Exam Tip
Remember to write your own notes on Stanislavski's system as a framework for its own working method. Practitioners of the system are called 'practitioners'.



For Stanislavski, a key method of creating a truthful character was to look not just at what was written in the script, but at the subtext. This meant both the surface meaning of the text, and any potential hidden meanings. He also considered how the other facts of the character's life, performance and outside of it, might affect their thoughts and feelings and therefore their external actions. If the actor spoke independently of thought, there would be a truthfully portrayed character on stage.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



⁴ *Building a Character*, Stanislavski, K (Methuen, 1950), p. 295

⁵ *My Life in Art*, Stanislavski, K (Routledge, 2008), p. 257

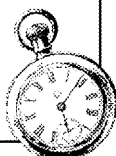
⁶ *My Life in Art* as quoted in: *Stanislavski: An Introduction*, Benedetti, J (Methuen, 1982), p. 34

Exploring subtext meant significant work in rehearsal constructing a backstory for improvisation and personal experience to create a whole character. He felt that on the stage, from the smallest character to the lead role. This is one of the reasons he was a keen supporter of equality within an ensemble, where no one actor always had the lead. All characters on stage should be equally three dimensional and believable and therefore important to the telling of the story.

Exam Tip

Collect photographs, magazine cuttings and printouts to develop your ideas and to show what they are important. 'All students must produce a portfolio documenting and reflecting on their exploratory process'

A Level component 1 p. 17 'a portfolio of evidence', AS Level component 1 p. 17



Another key aspect which was the psychological realism of a performance stage and costume. When Stanislavski was often stereotyped, with some lack of any sense of reality. Costumes with specific styles of costume for different characters. Stanislavski's focus was on detailed design and the staging and costume used to help create a sense of reality on stage enabling the audience to believe in the world created on stage.

Stanislavski also believed that action on stage should be a part of the realism. He believed in the use of melodrama, where actors moved merely because they felt they ought to do so. Movements associated with the emotion, like hand on the heart for love or the beating of the heart to show woe and distress. **Stanislavski felt that action on stage should be guided by what the character would do in the situation if this were reality.** If the character paced the stage in nervousness because pacing shows nervousness, but because this is what that character would do.

Experimentation over realism

Despite having an overarching wish to create a system for training actors, Stanislavski was developing and experimenting. His system was not fixed, but continually developing.

Although he was primarily focused on truth and is traditionally associated with realism, it was the fact that realism was the experimental and theatrical approach through his lifetime.

Stanislavski explored symbolism throughout his career and towards the end of his life. He was working on a production with Vsevolod Meyerhold combining the system with the theory of biomechanics. On the surface, biomechanics opposed the system as it required actors to use their bodies to physically communicate, often without language. Stanislavski, however, valued the experimentation and willingness to question the received wisdom of how things 'should be done'.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED

Stanislavski's Artistic Intentions: Consolidation Questions

Activity One: What Have You Learnt?

i	Individual	45 mins–1 hour	No extra resources
----------	------------	----------------	--------------------

- 1) What did Stanislavski mean by the grammar of acting?
- 2) How did Stanislavski see imagination fitting with his system?
- 3) In what ways does Stanislavski's idea of psychological realism enable actors to see it as so important?
- 4) What is subtext, and did Stanislavski see it as important?
- 5) How did Stanislavski see costume and staging as fitting with his ideas?
- 6) Who was Stanislavski working with towards the end of his career and why might this be a strange partnership?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Stanislavski's Artistic Intentions: Extended Research Activities

Activity One: 'Truth' in Stage Design

i	Individual	45 mins–1 hour	A familiar play text
----------	------------	----------------	----------------------

Staging

It was not just the action on stage which Stanislavski wanted to evoke a sense of truth. He also considered the stage design, costume and props. Stage design would recreate action and movement, and were then placed on stage to create a truthful representation of life.

Part one:

- 1) Pick a scene with which you are familiar.
- 2) Choose one scene (it can be anywhere within the play).
- 3) Now complete the table below:

Stanislavskian staging	
Play and playwright	
What you know about set from the script. This can be from stage directions and lines. It does not just have to be from the scene you have picked; if something is mentioned elsewhere in the script, remember to include this.	
What you can infer from other elements of the script. Does any action, dialogue or the play tell you anything about the period, wealth, style or interests of the characters, for example?	
Anything you would like to add and why. Is there anything you could use in the staging that you think could reflect something important about the characters or themes?	

Part two: Create a detailed stage design for the scene you have chosen. You might design it on computer. Remember to use all the information you collected in the table above.

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Activity Two: Subtext

i	Individual	20 minutes	No extra resources
---	------------	------------	--------------------

Stanislavski's approach looked carefully at not just the words on the page, but also those that are unsaid, but reveal a lot. In many ways, the subtext was more important than the 'truthful' characters.

Look at this mini-script. Consider the subtext and characters' feelings that might be contained in your ideas next to the lines.

<p><i>Dave has just returned from work. Suhkri is sitting on the sofa. Their four-week-old baby is asleep on her chest. She looks shattered and is staring at the TV in front of her, although it is not on.</i></p> <p>Dave: Hi, Love. How was your day? Better today? [pause] Did you see the NCT girls?</p> <p><i>Suhkri continues to stare ahead.</i></p> <p>Dave: Suhk?</p> <p>Suhkri: Oh. Hi. [Begins to sob uncontrollably]</p> <p>Dave: Suhk, what's wrong? We can't keep doing this. I don't know how to help. I am knackered. I have been at work all day. The day was mad. I didn't get any sleep last night. Suhk! I don't know what to do.</p> <p>Suhkri: I can't do this. Even the cleaners are a better mum than me. They understand their children. Their children smile.</p> <p>Dave: He is asleep now!</p> <p>Suhkri: Oh yes, because that is what has happened all day. I have had a perfect sleeping angel and I could be a domestic goddess while you were hard at work being the man and bring home the bacon!</p> <p>Dave: That's not what I meant.</p> <p><i>The baby begins to cry.</i></p> <p>Suhkri: And I don't even know what he needs! Is he tired? Is he hungry? I don't know. I thought mums were supposed to know. I don't know!</p> <p><i>Dave moves to hug the two of them. Suhkri pushes him away and turns her back to him.</i></p>	

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Activity Three: Evolving Theatre

i	Pairs	45 mins–1 hour + presentation time	
---	-------	------------------------------------	--

Stanislavski's system was always evolving and changing. He said that the production should be 'conventionalised, modernistic, expressionistic or futuristic'⁷ as long as it was truthful for the audience.

Had Stanislavski still been alive today, we can surmise that he would have incorporated elements of theatrical practice into his work.

Below are listed theatrical forms, plus a quote outlining an element of that form, which is contrary to Stanislavski's view of realism and truth. Working in pairs, pick one of the forms, identify its features and think about how it links with what you know about Stanislavski's system.

- **Theatre of Cruelty** 'We do not intend to do away with dialogue, but to give words a significance they have in dreams' (*First Manifesto*, Antonin Artaud)
- **Epic Theatre** 'Its qualities of clear description and reporting and its use of characters as means of commentary earned it the name 'epic'.' (*Bertolt Brecht translated*)
- **Theatre of the Absurd** 'It aims to shock art its audience out of complacency, to present the harsh facts of the human situation as these writers see it.' (*Absurd Drama*, C. J. E. Spurgeon)

You finally need to create a presentation to share your findings with the class.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



⁷ *My Life in Art*, Konstantin Stanislavski (Methuen, London, 1980), pp. 486–487

Stanislavski's Artistic Intentions: Practical Activities

For Stanislavski, it was important that actions on the stage were as truthful as real life was reflected. It is useful to try to represent reality, both for the successes and the failures. Both success and failure can be equally informative. For Stanislavski, it was important to observe the work of others and to have his own work observed. This helped you to get a clearer perspective on how your work comes across and enabled yourself to improve.

Try the following activity to reflect on the successes and failures of your art.

Activity On Successes and Failures

i	Pair	15–20 minutes
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) In a pair, one person (person A) leaves the room whilst the other (person B) hides a key or other small object. The purpose is for the key to be found, so don't hide it too well. Person A then comes back in and must look for the key. Person B should observe person A and make notes about how person A moves, their facial expressions, any words they say, and the sounds they make, etc.2) Once person A has found the key, the drama stops and person B feeds back to person A.3) Person A should then put the key back in the same place and leave the room. Person B should recreate 'looking for the key' as truthfully as possible. Again person B makes notes.4) Person B should then feedback the successes and failures of the second performance.5) Person A should then attempt the same improvisation again, reflecting on the feedback outlined by person B.6) Consider the following questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A: Which successes and failures were helpful?• B: Which failures were more helpful and why?		

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Activity Two: Stock vs Realism

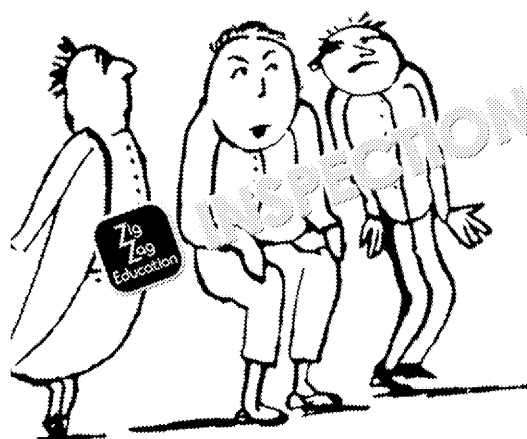
i	Pair/small group	15–20 minutes	
---	------------------	---------------	--

Melodrama and the theatre practices of which Stanislavski was critical, relied heavily on stock actions which were truthful.

In pairs or small groups, take one of the role plays below and create two versions of the interaction. In the first version, you should play the interaction in a stylised manner using stock actions to reveal the melodramatic way. In the second version, you should attempt to play the role play in as realistic a way as you can. The intention is for you, the actor, and therefore the audience to experience the emotions in the situation.

<p>Situation one: Paired</p> <p>Two friends. One asks the other to help them cheat in an upcoming test. The other is unsure about whether or not they feel comfortable doing this but does not want to lose the friendship.</p>	<p>Situation two: Group</p> <p>You are teenagers walking home from school. One friend is very nervous about a party. This is the first time they have been to a party where you know that they will be alone. Try to show a realistic reaction.</p>
<p>Situation three: Group</p> <p>The aftermath of a low speed car accident.</p> <p>Characters:</p> <p>The driver of the car – in shock; really worried about the pedestrian.</p> <p>The pedestrian who was crossing the road and hit by the car.</p> <p>The friend of the pedestrian.</p> <p>People who were walking past at the time.</p>	<p>Situation four: Group</p> <p>You are in a waiting room for a doctor.</p> <p>Person A) very nervous, Person B) is very arrogant, Person C) really needs to see the doctor, Person D) has been forced to wait for a long time.</p>
<p>Situation five: Paired</p> <p>You are at a friend's house. Both of you are in love with the other person, but you are both too shy to say anything.</p>	<p>Situation six: Paired</p> <p>Doctor and patient. The patient has a condition that they have to live with. They need urgent treatment.</p>

Having run these role plays in both the melodramatic style and the realistic style, discuss the advantages or disadvantages of each way of performing, both for an actor and for an audience.



COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Activity Three: Making Monologue Seem Truthful

i	Individual	15 minutes + performance	
---	------------	--------------------------	--

Monologues can be difficult to stage truthfully. We don't speak aloud to ourselves. Playwrights use monologues to show an audience the internal thoughts of a character.

Part one: Read the following extract from *Macbeth* (you could use other monologues from other plays/playwrights) and make notes about how you would perform the speech truthfully.

Act I, Scene v

Lady Macbeth has received a letter from her husband explaining that three witches calling him 'thane of Cawdor', a title which the King gave himself when the witches also predicted him he was going to be King. Macbeth is reflecting on the truth of the prediction. The original script is on the left and a modern translation on the right.

Lady Macbeth: Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be

What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature;

It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness

To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great,

Art not without ambition, but without

The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst have

That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not so play, false,

And yet wouldst win it. Thou'd'st have, great Glamis,

That which thou dost fear to do, 'Thus thou must do,' if thou have it,

And that which rather thou dost fear to do,

Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,

That I may pour my spirits in thine ear

And chastise with the valor of my tongue

All that impedes thee from the golden round,

Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem

To have thee crowned withal.

You
C
W
w
Is
T
be
Y
the
Un
you
Y
lie
B
Y
A
yet
Y
m
Y
be
S
sp
A
A
the
W
H

Part two: Now perform your version of the monologue to the class.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



4: The Innovative Nature of Stanislavski's Approach

This section is intended to help you to see how Stanislavski was an innovator and in what ways his thoughts about, and work in, theatre were different and unusual at the time.

This section is divided as follows:

- 1) Research notes on the innovative nature of Stanislavski's approach.
- 2) Consolidation questions to cement the knowledge you have gained from reading the research notes.
- 3) Extended research activities to encourage further research into the innovative nature of his approach.
- 4) Practical activities to enable you to further explore Stanislavski's innovative approach.

The focus AO for this section is: AO1 'making connections between theory and practice'.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



The Innovative Nature of Stanislavski's Approach: Research Notes

As with most theatre practitioners whose influence has stood the test of time, Stanislavski's work was a reaction against what he saw as the staid and hackneyed nature of the theatre of his time. He wanted to create something new and different. He felt that theatre did not offer truth to its audience, and he wanted to use its ability to civilize and educate.

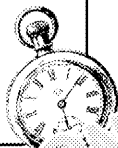
These were the areas in which Stanislavski's approach was innovative. **It was also his intention to create a system for the complete training of actors**, something which he himself had found to be completely lacking in the training of actors.

The way in which Stanislavski approached theatre was also new. **He focused on the processes of acting, treating them as important as the performance itself.** In some ways, the process was more important, as he felt that without those processes the performance could never be achieved. His system and his way of working focused on using rehearsal to create a clear understanding of the action that could then be applied to direction, design and performance. He saw the actor's life on stage, truthfully.

Exam Tip

Keep detailed notes of the visual, spatial and aural elements of any productions you see. This can inform your devising (component 1 A/AS Level), your interpretation of a performance text and your live theatre evaluation.

(component 2 AS; component 3 A Level)



He wanted to ensure all elements of a production were considered and with purpose.

He was reacting against the way in which things as they had always been done. The melodrama did with its stock scenes, actions and stock characters. In 1898, part of the first production of *The Seagull* in 1898, part of the first production of the Moscow Art Theatre, his detailed notes about the production elements (or the directorial score) were so detailed that it threatened to overshadow the performance itself. However, Stanislavski himself suggested his play be performed in a way that would not overshadow the performance itself.

Key innovative performances

The Seagull, Anton Chekhov, 1898: First collaboration with Chekhov who was a professional acquaintance and a close personal friend. Also Stanislavski's first in which he used the subtext and used the principles of psychological realism.

Hamlet, William Shakespeare, 1911/12: Collaboration with Edward Gordon Craig's symbolist aesthetic and Stanislavski's psychological realism. The production was a success in reviews but is also said to have influenced the staging of Shakespeare in the 20th century.

The Government Inspector, Gogol, 1921: Critically-acclaimed and a huge success. The performance breaks with the expectations of the system, with a grotesque and a grotesque performance.

Le Mariage de Figaro, Beaumarchais, 1927: Stanislavski's final fully realised production. Uses new technology to break new ground, with a revolving stage.

Another factor in Stanislavski's innovation came from his wish to keep evolving his system. This meant that his work was always changing and developing, incorporating new ideas and techniques. He wanted to create a system which could be used to train actors, he **did not want** to create a system which was like what had gone before. Until the day he died, he was experimenting with new ideas. Some of his last elements of the system were based on his ideas for method acting. The change from his previous focus on the internal thoughts and feelings of the character to a more external focus was a result of his final collaboration. He worked with Vsevolod Meyerhold on the production of *The Seagull*.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Meyerhold was working on a system for training actors which seems, on first look, that of Stanislavski. Where Stanislavski worked for most of his career on ideas about psychological drive, Meyerhold's biomechanics worked from the idea that actors were puppeteered by their director and used physical action to experience emotion. And yet **Stanislavski and Meyerhold were working towards a performance which was a system, another innovative idea.** At this point, Stanislavski was developing his system which involved using physical actions to provoke emotion, rather than the internal state of the character and leaving physical actions to last, as he began to encourage up until that point.

Stanislavski's work was based on trial and error. He did not come to the system but instead through trying and trying out all the elements. He felt that this was sought to find a system, to give actual examples and to have experimented with. This is reflected in the fact his books are written as Tortsov and Kostya. The books follow the trial and error of the actor/director relationship. This may have been part of his longevity. He does not tell actors what to do from a position of power, but speaks of ideas rather than offering a foregone conclusion as a solution.

Another innovative element for which Stanislavski is well known is his experimentation with upsides and downsides. It is what allowed him to develop new and innovative ways of working, with its fair share of failure and in some cases created tension within the Moscow Art Theatre studios in which experimentation could take place. He also worked, in the main, with actors who were more inclined to trial his new ways of working than the older more experienced actors.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



The Innovative Nature of Stanislavski's Approach: Consolidation

Activity One: What Have You Learnt?

i	Individual	20 minutes	No extra resources
----------	------------	------------	--------------------

- 1) What form of acting was Stanislavski's work in opposition to and why?
- 2) In your own words, explain what the directorial score means.
- 3) How and why was rehearsal important to Stanislavski?

The Innovative Nature of Stanislavski's Approach: Extended Response

Activity One: Create a mis en scène

i	Individual	40 minutes	Familiar play text
----------	------------	------------	--------------------

Mis en scène or directorial score was an innovation in terms of dramatic production. Setting, costume, action and props were dictated by what was already available rather than by what fitted with the play or performance. Stanislavski's creation of the directorial score was intended to give more depth and truth to a production.

Take the opening section for a play with which you are familiar and create a detailed directorial score for the opening moments of the performance. Remember to consider the staging, lighting, sound and how you would block the actors and how they would deliver their opening lines.

Activity Two: Create a Timeline of MAT Productions

i	Individual	40 minutes	Access to Internet
----------	------------	------------	--------------------

Four key MAT productions have been highlighted in this section. Create a timeline and plot these productions onto it. Then add at least four more productions of your choice, noting their successes and/or failures.

There are many productions which could be named here. A good list can be found at https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow_Art_Theatre although you will have to note the successes and failures of the productions separately. A useful website with both productions and reviews is www.encyclopedia.com/literature-and-arts/performing-arts/theater/moscow-art-theatre. The current MAT is also useful. In particular, the page www.mxat.ru/english/history/

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



The Innovative Nature of Stanislavski's Approach: Practical Act

Activity One: Trial and Error

i	Pair or small group	20–30 minutes + performance
----------	---------------------	-----------------------------

As explained in the research notes (4), one of the innovative findings about the system was the fact that they recorded the trial and error of his dramatic journey, rather than answers. The system is a process of development and therefore trial and error are

Work on the mini-scene below. You could work in a pair and both work as actors, or you could work in a group of three or more with directors and observers all involved. Firstly, read it through and then trial the variety of different interpretations suggested below (and any of your own).

Mini-scene

Character a: I shouldn't have done it

Character b: No, you shouldn't have

Character a: I am sorry

Character b: Thank you

- 1) Try saying the lines with different tones, such as: sarcastic; disappointed; regretful.
- 2) Try saying the lines with different backstories, such as: character a is a child and character b is a parent; character a is a partner who has cheated on character b; character a is a teen and character b is the shopkeeper who caught them.
- 3) Try saying all the lines without moving at all and then try saying them while moving.
- 4) After each of the rehearsal techniques discussed with your partner (and observer) help you to understand the character and why? What scenarios did you feel were most truthful?
- 5) Now perform your favourite to the rest of the class and ask them for their opinion on the performance and why.

Activity Two: With and Without Props

i	Pair	10 minutes
----------	------	------------

- 1) With a partner, first try to perform an everyday activity in mime with as much detail as you can. Examples: drinking a cup of tea, brushing your hair, putting on make-up. Something that you can do without props.
- 2) Now try the activity again, but this time with the correct prop – a cup, hairbrush, etc.
- 3) Which version of the performance was easier? Which felt more truthful? Can your partner observe to be the most truthful?
- 4) Now swap roles with your partner.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



5: Stanislavski's Working

This section focuses on key elements of the system. It outlines some of the key re what they mean and how they can be applied, as well as the intended outcomes

This section is divided as follows:

- 1) Research notes on Stanislavski's working in a focus.
- 2) Consolidation questions to ensure the knowledge you have gained from reading the research notes.
- 3) Extended research activities to encourage further research into Stanislavski's working methods and the system.
- 4) Practical activities to enable you to further explore Stanislavski's system.

The focus AO for this section is: AO3 'knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed'

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Stanislavski's Working Methods: Research Notes

Stanislavski developed his system over his lifetime. What we have now is not necessarily a finished product, but where he had got to, when he died. Had he lived longer, he would no doubt have developed the system further as this was what he was doing, pretty much until the day he died. He believed in experimenting and moving forward so in essence his system could never be complete. By the end of his life, he had however set up the Opera-Dramatic Institute, which is widely accepted as the most full representation of his system as it stood at the end of his life. His books, most of which were edited from his notes after his death, are what we refer to when outlining Stanislavski's system for training actors.

Exam Tip

Most of the elements of the system are covered in the Stanislavski system. 'Script and understanding methodology' practitioner AS Level Component 1



Unlike many of his contemporaries, Stanislavski was key to the development of a great performer. Instead of relying on directors (or actors) deciding which clichéd lines to use, he noticed that rehearsals consisted of directors (or actors) deciding which clichéd lines to use. After a couple of run throughs in rehearsal, the actors were expected to know their lines, however a prompter would be used during the performance, prompting lines which were not remembered. The prompter cast didn't even bother to learn their lines, relying on the prompter. For Stanislavski, this was not acceptable.

rehearsals to be used not merely as a practise for the performance, but as a time to develop the character and its characters and for creating believable and truthful performances.

There are many elements to the system, and this guide can only touch on a few, but it covers the most important areas of Stanislavski's work and techniques so that you can then apply them to your own work.

Key elements of the system

Action: The physical actions of a character on stage.

Magic If: Imagining 'as if' you are the character.

Given Circumstances: The elements given to you in the script.

Imagination: What the actor brings to the text themselves, over and above what is written in the script.

Units and Objectives: The sections a script can be broken down into and the motivation for each unit.

Super-objective and Through-line of Action: The overarching motivation for the whole script and the manner in which this moves through the story.

Subtext: The hidden meanings in the script.

Circle of Attention: Rehearsal technique whereby actors relax on stage and focus on the reality of the text, not the stage.

Emotion Memory: A technique whereby actors use their own emotional reactions to bring a true character to life.

Tempo-rhythm: The pace and rhythm of the inner and outer life.

Action

This is the physical movement of a character on stage. Stanislavski wanted to avoid stylised actions of movement. He felt that any action an actor made on stage should be motivated by a purpose and why the character is moving in that way. Action, for Stanislavski, also meant the purpose carried out by the character, as important as movement. Overall, Stanislavski felt that every movement should have a purpose.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Example:

Two characters on stage who are in love with each other, but in a large group of clichéd hugs and kisses to show their love. A loving look or a meaningful touch is more in keeping with shows of love in real life in those situations. Equally, a loving look is also key to the development of a believable and truthful character.

The magic if

Stanislavski wanted actors not to show a character, but to behave as if they were the character. He wanted his actors to ask 'If I were in this situation what would I do?' This was intended to create a more natural and truthful character on stage.

Example:

An actor playing a character must believe that he or she must behave as if they were the character.

In fact, Stanislavski wanted actors to ask themselves three questions as a mode of 'What do I do', secondly, 'Why do I do it' and thirdly 'How do I do it'.

Example:

Dave has just returned from work. Suhkri is sitting on the sofa. Their eight-week-old baby is asleep on her chest. She looks shattered and is staring at the TV in front of her, although it is not on.

Given circumstances: Dave and Suhkri have an eight-week-old baby; they live together (we may assume they are partners); Dave works; Suhkri has been at home with the baby; Suhkri is very tired.

**Given circumstances**

These are the information and elements that the actor has to know about the role. From stage directions, the script, and others, what do you know about the character from the context of the time and place of the action? What do you know from the director's intentions, from the staging, props and set design, from the lighting and sound effects? What do you know about every element of the role? What do you know about the elements that the actor can build on to how they behave?

Imagination

Stanislavski wanted actors to take the given circumstances and then build on them with imagination. Some people call this element the proposed circumstances. Stanislavski said that if you did not know all elements of your character and their motivation, you were acting without your imagination and therefore acting without truth.

'If you speak any lines, or do anything, mechanically, without fully realizing who you are, where you came from, why, what you want, where you are going and what you will do when you get there, you will be acting without your imagination.'⁸

Example:

In the example, we know that Suhkri is depressed about motherhood and Dave has a baby into the house.

We might expect that through our more depth, Dave had a baby into the house. Perhaps Suhkri struggled to

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED

⁸ *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavski, K (Methuen, 1937), p. 72

Units and objectives

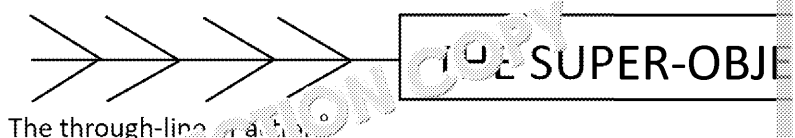
Stanislavski felt that to truly understand a character you had to understand their motivation. To understand the motivations, you needed to split the script into sections. He called these sections units. In rehearsal you should split the text into sections, each of which has a different motivation. You then decide what your character's motivation is for the achievement of this objective and move on to the next unit. As rehearsals continued, Stanislavski felt these small units would eventually build up to a complete performance that the acting did not become fragmented. He wanted the objectives to be phased.

Example: Units and Objectives for <i>An Actor Prepares</i>	
<p>Dave: Hi, Love. How was your day? Better today? [pause] Did you see the new pants?</p> <p><i>Suhkri comes in and stares ahead.</i></p> <p>Dave: Suhkri!</p> <p>Suhkri: Oh. Hi. [Begins to sob uncontrollably]</p>	<p>Unit one: Objective to...</p>
<p>Dave: Suhk, what's wrong? We can't keep doing this. I don't know how to help. I am knackered. I have been at work all day. The day was mad. I didn't get any sleep last night. Suhk! I don't know what to do.</p> <p>Suhkri: I can't do this. Everyone else is a better mum than me. They understand their children. Their children sleep.</p> <p>Dave: He is asleep now!</p> <p>Suhkri: Oh yes, because that is what has happened all day. I have had a perfect sleeping angel and I could be a domestic goddess while you were hard at work being the man and bringing home the bacon!</p>	<p>Unit two: To understand... *It is possible to play different objectives, such as to be stupid; or to get Suhkri obsessed; or to help Suhkri do a good job. Different objectives of the character that you play have a very different effect on...</p>
<p>Dave: That's not what I mean! <i>The baby comes in and...</i></p> <p>Suhkri: Ah! I don't even know what he needs! Is he tired? Is he hungry? I don't know. I thought mums were supposed to know. I don't know!</p> <p><i>Dave moves to hug the two of them. Suhkri passes him the baby and turns her back on them both.</i></p>	<p>Unit three: To make... *Again, think of how the action would be different if the objective to show Suhkri he knows how to show Suhkri he knows...</p>

Super-objective and through-line of action

The way in which the units described above would be connected was by the super-objective. The super-objective is the overriding objective. The linking of the small units to the super-objective is called the through-line of action.

In *An Actor Prepares*, the director character or Tortsov illustrates it like this:



This was intended to illustrate the fact that each smaller objective feeds into the super-objective. Stanislavski felt that no matter how good each part was, unless it fed into the performance as a whole would lack direction and truth.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



⁹ *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavski, K (Methuen, 1950), p. 276

Example:

In the example above, where Dave has three units and three objectives (Unit one: To understand the relationship between the characters; Unit two: To understand Suhkri; Unit three: To make it up to Suhkri) the aim is to make Suhkri feel better.

Subtext

Again, during the rehearsal process, Stanislavski wanted actors to go back to the text and think about all of what was being said by the characters. For him, this was not just what was said but the subtext which was implied. In many ways, Stanislavski felt that the subtext was more important than what was actually said in terms of creating a psychologically real performance.

Example Script	Subtext
<i>Dave has just returned from work. Suhkri is sitting on the sofa. Their eight-week-old baby is asleep on her chest. She looks shattered and is staring at the TV in front of her, although it is not on.</i>	Both characters are tired.
Dave: Hi, Love. How was your day? Better today? [pause] Did you see the NCT girls? <i>Suhkri continues to stare ahead.</i>	She has had bad days and wants to lighten the mood and hopes Dave was happy.
Dave: Suhk?	She has not had a good day.
Suhkri: Oh. Hi. [Begins to sob uncontrollably]	He doesn't know what to do. He feels like he is expected to fix things but he is finding things hard.
Dave: Suhk, what's wrong? We can't keep doing this. I don't know how to help. I am knackered. I have been at work all day. The day was mad. I didn't get any sleep last night. Suhk! I don't know what to do.	He is frustrated.
Suhkri: I can't do this. For some reason I am a better mum than me. They are better and their children. Their children are better than mine.	Her day has made her feel like a failure at parenting.
Dave: He is tired now!	Stop complaining!
Suhkri: Oh yes, because that is what has happened all day. I have had a perfect sleeping angel and I could be a domestic goddess while you were hard at work being the man and bring home the bacon!	She feels he doesn't understand her. She feels their roles are reversed by traditional gender roles.
Dave: That's not what I meant. <i>The baby begins to cry.</i>	He is frustrated.
Suhkri: And I don't even know what he needs! Is he tired? Is he hungry? I don't know. I thought mums were supposed to know. I don't know!	She feels confused and doesn't understand the child.
<i>Dave moves to hug the two of them. Suhkri passes him the baby and turns her back on them but not before she looks at Dave.</i>	Their relationship is strained.

Circle of attention and public solitude

This is a rehearsal technique which can then be brought into a performance as a way of creating a realistic atmosphere on stage. The circle of attention is the area with which the actor focuses their attention during rehearsal. Stanislavski used to use was to ask an actor to sit on a chair in the middle of a stage and imagine that the circle of attention must focus only on what is within the spotlight, and to begin with this is a small circle. As the actor moves through the full of other actors, to concentrate only on what is within the very small circle of attention. Stanislavski called public solitude. If this is recreated on stage, an actor is able to perform alone, despite being in an auditorium in front of an audience.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED

Emotion memory

Emotion memory is another exercise to be used in rehearsal. The idea is to fuse the actor with the imagined experiences of the character. By bringing personal emotion to the character, Stanislavski felt that there would be a more truthful representation of each emotion. He also felt that by remembering past emotions, the actor could bring a more realistic action to a performance.

Exam Tip

During rehearsal, why not try some of Stanislavski's rehearsal techniques as a way of developing your character. 'recognise and apply the practitioner methodology to their own work.' (A Level Component 1 p. 13) Remember to keep a log to use as evidence in your portfolio.



Tempo-rhythm

Stanislavski's idea of tempo-rhythm developed later in his work. It came from his total inward focus of emotion memory. Different states have particular rhythms. He encouraged actors to have their own tempo-rhythm. It was about the time and that this may well be different from the stage. This contrast of internal and external is an interesting and multi-texture piece. For example, melancholic, their tempo-rhythm may be slow, surrounded by active, playing children, their tempo-rhythm will be fast, an atmosphere of chaos. Stanislavski felt that it was very important to not take on the tempo-rhythm of others but to keep their own distinct.

It is also possible that a single character may have a conflict between their inner tempo-rhythm and the outer tempo-rhythm they are trying to portray to other characters, for example a character who is secretly about which they are very excited. Again, this tension between the inner and outer tempo-rhythm can create both a true portrayal and an excitement or suspense.



**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Stanislavski's Working Methods: Consolidation Questions

Activity One: What Have You Learnt?

i	Individual	30 minutes	No extra resources
----------	------------	------------	--------------------

- 1) What sets Stanislavski apart from his contemporaries?
- 2) What are the three questions Stanislavski wanted actors to ask, to analyse a character?
- 3) Create a diagram, to explain how, in any circumstances, units, objectives, super-objectives, relate to each other.

Activity Two: The Mental Technique Roulette

i	Class or groups	15 minutes	
----------	-----------------	------------	--

Cut out the cards below and put them in a hat. Each player starts with 3 points. The player with the highest score as much as you can, and when you reach 0 points, you are out.

Each person takes it in turns to draw one of the cards. When you draw a technique card, you must give a brief explanation is correct you score one point. If you draw a 'Bang! Bang!' card you are always returned to the hat.

Once you lose all your points you are out. The winner is the last person in. You can play for as long as you like, where the winner is the highest scoring person after a set amount of time or turns.

Action	Units and Objectives	
Magic IF	Super-objective	U
Given Circumstances	Subtext	Th
Imagination	Circle of Attention	
Bang! Bang!	Emotion Memory	


COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Stanislavski's Working Methods: Extended Research Activities

Activity One: Units and Objectives

i	Individual	15 minutes	Familiar play text
----------	------------	------------	--------------------

Take a small section of a script with which you are familiar (about 1 or 2 pages). Choose a section to be your focus. Break down the script into units and select a section for that character with an objective which is phrased as 'I want...'.


Activity Two: Rehearsal Schedule

i	Individual	20 minutes	No extra resources
----------	------------	------------	--------------------

Imagine you are directing a performance. You need to create a rehearsal schedule for your actors and their characters. Pick four of Stanislavski's techniques and decide which order you will use them in. Also decide how long your actors should spend on each rehearsal technique and whether they should work on their own, in groups with other actors or as a whole class. Write down the text you are imagining the rehearsals being for.

Activity Three: Rehearsal Activities

i	Group → class	30 minutes–1 hour, class size dependent
----------	---------------	---

Part one: In groups, pick one of the following techniques: Magic IF; emotion memory; physical action; rhythm. Ensure that each technique is covered across the class. You then have 15 minutes to create an original rehearsal activity that uses your chosen technique to help an actor explore the text.

Part two: After the 15 minutes, the groups will take turns to try out their activity. After each activity, you will be given a few minutes to take notes on what you thought of the activity and how it could be improved.

Part three: Once all the groups have tried out their activity on everyone else, you will have 15 minutes for the class to discuss your findings.



**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Stanislavski's Working Methods: Practical Activities

Activity One: Emotion Memory Stimulus

i	Individual → pair	25 minutes	Object from home
----------	-------------------	------------	------------------

At home: Find an object that reminds you of a moment with a very strong emotion. It could be a photograph of a holiday you went on, or an item that reminds you of a special person. Using the item as a stimulus, try to recreate that emotion through a small improvisation which recreates the situation. Try to remember exactly how you felt and exactly how you spoke.

In class: Pairs perform their scene and present your improvisation to the other. While performing, the observer focuses on the emotion(s) explored. At the end of the improvisation, they thought you showed and compare this with your intention.

Activity Two: Tempo-rhythm

i	Groups	30 minutes
----------	--------	------------

In small groups, improvise a short scene using the improvisation cards below. You can use all or but not all of the character cards need to be used.

Concentrate on the tempo-rhythm of your character. One member of the group acts as an observer who takes notes about how the tempo-rhythms of the characters interact in the piece overall.

<p>Situation: Train station in a small rural town.</p>	<p>Character one: Member of staff in the ticket office. You are coming to work on your shift. You're tired. It's been a long day of people asking stupid questions. You can't wait to go home.</p>	<p>Character two: A young couple. You are upgrading your seats. You're nervous.</p>
<p>Character three: Person in their 70s. You are going on a long journey to stay with your sister. Your daughter booked your tickets for you. You are getting them from the self-service ticket machine, which you don't know how to use. You are quite flustered. You have left yourself plenty of time to get the train, but this is not stopping you worrying.</p>	<p>Character four: Parent with young child in a buggy. You don't have a ticket and need the train which is due in 5 minutes. You've only just got here in time. The baby needed changing on the way, so you have a dirty nappy in your bag. You are worried other people can smell it. You're supposed to be meeting a childless friend in town for coffee.</p>	<p>Character five: A group of people waiting on the platform. You're bored. You've been waiting for a long time. Your friend is late. You're worried they won't come.</p>

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Activity Three: Personal Tempo-rhythm

i	Class	10 minutes	
---	-------	------------	--

Walk around the room with conflicting inner and outer tempo-rhythm and afterwards made you feel, and any difficulties you had completing the task. Below are some would allow the conflict of tempo-rhythm between inner and outer state:

Potential scenarios:

- You are on the way to visit an elderly person who is very ill and whom you love. You have just received a text from a person you have fancied for ages asking you on a date.
- You have just heard that you didn't get the job you wanted while you are hosting a party.
- You are at a audition and are feeling very nervous, but need to control the nerves like the other experienced actors.

Activity Four: With Purpose

i	Pairs	15 minutes	
---	-------	------------	--

Work in pairs, with one of you carrying out the activity and one of you observing. Put a chair in a space. Stand about 10 paces from the chair before you begin. One of you stands and sit down.

Now run the same exercise again, but before you do, use your imagination to create a chair? Why do you need to sit in it? What are you doing at the time? What is your mood?

Discuss the differences in your performance with your partner. Which version was better? Which time did you feel more at ease? Which time were you fully focused? Now discuss the differences in your performance with your partner.

Activity Five: Public Solitude

i	Class	5 minutes per student	
---	-------	-----------------------	--

Each member of the class will take a turn at being the actor while the rest of the class are the audience.

Arrange staging so that there is a single chair in the centre of the stage with a spotlight on it. Give each student three cards (below). Choose one of the cards and act as if the instructions on it are real.

The idea for the student acting is to ensure that their concentration is not broken by the audience around them. As the improvisation goes on, the spotlight should be widened to include the audience in the actor's circle of attention.

The audience should watch and try to guess which of the three cards the actor picked.

This is a photograph of your Grandfather, who passed away some years ago, and with whom you were very close.	This is the cue card that you have made for this presentation you are giving to do. If you do well, you will get a promotion at work.	This is a letter from your boss saying you have been promoted to a higher position.
--	---	---

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



6: The Performance Style and Conventions of the System

This section of the study pack gives you an outline of the performance style and theatrical conventions of Stanislavski's system, as well as the philosophy of these aspects of his system. The activities help you to explore these areas. There are also tips on how to use specific sections of the exam information which will help you to explore.



This section is divided as follows:

- 1) Research notes on the social, historical, and cultural context of Stanislavski's system
- 2) Consolidation questions to cement the knowledge you have gained from the research notes
- 3) Extended research activities to encourage further research into Stanislavski's system
- 4) Practical activities to enable you to further explore the life and times of Stanislavski

The focus AO for this section is: AO3 'how theatre is developed and performed'



**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



The Performance Style and Theatrical Conventions of the System

In many ways, performance style was less important to Stanislavski than the product of the system. The performance was achieved. This is shown by the bulk of his system being dedicated to techniques rather than staging conventions.

As a broad overview, Stanislavski's performance style is often wrongly pigeonholed as 'realism'. It is more accurate to say that his system was politically helpful, as it was aligned with the Soviet realism movement. The focus on internal and the psychological elements of the character also meant that his work was more about the inner life of the character. This focus on the inner life of the character also meant that his work was more about the inner life of the character. This focus on the inner life of the character also meant that his work was more about the inner life of the character.

Realism itself, however, has many elements. Stanislavski himself often substituted naturalism for realism and yet there are some key distinctions. **Naturalism is associated with French theatre, which was about accurately and methodically copying real life.** It was a direct response to the melodramatic characters of nineteenth century literature and drama; as was Stanislavski, who wanted to create a realistic portrayal of life, using realistic staging, props and costumes. The other key element to naturalism, was its interest in the mundane, and the lives of the underclasses and with love, death and moral decline; this set it apart from realism.

Realism grew out of naturalism. It did not have the same fascination with the lowly and ordinary people at the centre. This may have been working class, but was more about the intricate reproduction of real life favoured by naturalism, realism looked for a distillation of the key elements of real life to create an honest, theatrical representation. It wanted to engage the audience; the inclusion of mundane elements had the potential to do so.

Stanislavski himself sought to create realism on stage. In some cases, his detailed attempt to create truth, led to an over-cluttered stage and a tendency towards naturalism.

Elements of realism

There is no single set of rules about realism, but these are the elements we expect to find in the Realist mode:

- Four walls – the setting creating three walls and the fourth being the invisible wall between actors and audience. This Fourth wall is not crossed or broken in realist productions.
- Normal speech – people speak as they would in the real world, rather than in theatrical language, verse or other forms of communication.
- It is about normal people.
- It is set in real places, rather than being based in fantasy worlds.
- Realistic sets, props and costumes.
- Realistic sound and music.
- A clear focus on techniques which help to portray a life-like representation of reality.
- A focus on creating a believable representation of reality does not mean that it is not theatrical on stage, but that it creates a believable theatrical truth which the audience can accept and believe.

Perhaps the most important element of realism, however, is its focus on subtext. The underlying meaning of what is said by the character, more important than the surface meaning.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



It is this subtext which is seen in realism to give the characters a three-dimensional life. They are driven, sometimes by hidden agendas, sometimes by the constraints of the situation, sometimes by emotional responses over reason, that makes them appear human. **They have lives beyond the moment in which they exist, and this is what the focus on the audience: a life beyond the stage.** Characters are given a backstory. They exist before the performance that we see, and their actions and words affect both the other characters on stage and the audience.

Example of subtext

Script	Subtext
PE teacher: What a beautiful morning this is, girls. Beautiful day. Lovely.	PE teacher wants to encourage the girls to be positive. She also enjoys the weather.
Nathan: Bloody hell! What's she on about? It's bloody freezing. Bloody PE	Nathan does not like PE, especially not on a cold day.
PE teacher: Pardon?	PE teacher heard Nathan's attitude. Also wants to know what he has given her a chance to change.
Nathan: Nothing, Miss.	Understands the unwritten rule that 'Nothing' is the matter, and he will not be punished. She will not be punished.

Subtext was one of the driving factors in Stanislavski's system and something which was central to his work. At the beginning of his work on the system, he went for quite an academic analysis as the first, and often biggest, part of the rehearsal process. Towards the end of his life, he had moved more towards improvisation and practical rehearsal techniques as a way of achieving that subtext remained dominant to the end product of a theatrical performance.

As noted in previous chapters, Stanislavski was an innovator and he feared nothing stagnating. It was not just his approach to the rehearsal process that changed the performance styles also of the time. He experimented with symbolism, staged working on a production by combining elements of biomechanics and the system. It was typically believed that anything was possible within realism. **He was not afraid to pick anything from the theatre he explored, if they created what he considered to be a dramatic truth.**

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**





The Performance Style and Theatrical Conventions of the System

Activity One: What Have You Learnt?

i	Individual	20 minutes	No extra resources
----------	------------	------------	--------------------

- 1) What theatrical style is Stanislavski most commonly associated with?
- 2) What are the key similarities and differences between realism and naturalism?

Similarities	
	
	

- 3) According to the notes, which of the common features of realism noted in the notes through his career?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



The Performance Style and Theatrical Conventions of the System: Ex

Activity One: Setting and Realism

i	Individual	20 minutes	Access to Internet
----------	------------	------------	--------------------

Find a photograph of a production by Stanislavski (there are some links below with a picture and explain how the setting fits into the genre of realism.

<http://profdrih.blogspot.co.uk/2016/06/the-photos-which-define-the-195-written-by-anton.html>

<http://theatrefutures.org.uk/stanislavski/anton/event-stanislavski-on-stage/>

<http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/actortraining/practitioner-stanislavsky/>

Activity Two: Subtext

i	Class	20 minutes	
----------	-------	------------	--

Watch a clip, either one of the two links below or one you have shown to your teacher, and write a commentary explaining the subtext within it. It may be useful to read a brief summary of the play before watching the clip to provide some context.

Much Ado About Nothing: Act IV, Scene i

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK0jIGM-uSI>

Long Day's Journey into Night: Act II opening

https://youtu.be/sA731BYRgvs?list=PL_-DOtschlAx13gNuW4d4NpLfgTHUNE2

Activity Three: Psychological Realism

i	Individual	10 minutes	No extra resources
----------	------------	------------	--------------------

Write a definition of the term: psychological realism

.....

.....

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



The Performance Style and Theatrical Conventions of the System

Activity One: Subtext

i	Pairs	10 minutes
----------	-------	------------

In pairs, cut out each of the role cards below and place them face down in two piles and one pile of role cards. Choose one of the situation cards between you and the other person. Don't show each other your subtext card.

Together you then begin to improvise the situation that is on your situation card. If there is time, try to do some improvisation, but with different subtext cards. What happens (or doesn't)?

Situation You are at a bus stop waiting for the bus to work.	Situation You are at the bar waiting for a blind date.	Situation You are at the bar waiting for a blind date.
Subtext You are in a foul mood because your car broke down.	Subtext You really don't like the other person, but you have been brought up to be very polite.	Subtext You really don't like the other person, but you have been brought up to be very polite.
Subtext You are in love with the other person.	Subtext You are really sad because you just took your dog to be put down.	Subtext You are really sad because you just took your dog to be put down.
Subtext You are very confident, verging on arrogant, about your ability to excel at what you are doing currently.	Subtext You have just noticed an ulcer on your back and it is really bugging you.	Subtext You have just noticed an ulcer on your back and it is really bugging you.

Activity Two: What Needs to be Left Out?

i	Groups	15 minutes + performance
----------	--------	--------------------------

Stanislavski felt that truth on stage was different to truth in real life and that mere naturalism) was not theatrically interesting. Somethings would need to be left out for the audience and not to merely bore them with watching a complete reconstruction. Improvise a scene where a child tries to cheat in an exam. There are several challenges:

- Remember an exam is long. How much do you need to show to give a sense of the audience?
- How can you show something that by its nature would have to be difficult to be and realistic?
- How do you recreate an exam room that the audience will believe and make it happen?

Show your scene to the rest of the class and give them group feedback about the performance.

- How truthful was the representation?
- How interesting was the performance to watch?
- What was the most effective part of the performance?
- What could have been improved?

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Activity Three: Realism and Symbolism

i	Groups	45 minutes–1 hour	
---	--------	-------------------	--

Stanislavski was happy to combine realism with symbolism. Your challenge is to do the truth of the performance.

Part one: In small groups of 3–6, you are going to create a short improvisation. There must be a prop which is used to signify the main character and more than one character during the improvisation. You could, for example, follow your character through his/her life and each actor could play a different age using the prop to show the character. You should try to create a character who is equally truthful through each not playing their own character, you can play other characters as necessary.

Part two: Now get back together with your class and discuss the following:

What were the successes and failures of trying to combine symbolism and realism?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



7: Stanislavski's Collaboration with Other Practitioners

This section of the study pack explores Stanislavski's collaboration with other practitioners. Stanislavski collaborated with many actors, directors, designers, playwrights and theatre practitioners over the years. This section will focus on his work with Edward Gordon Craig, Chekhov and Gorki. The activities here will explore the collaborations and how they influenced Stanislavski's work. There are also tips showing where this specific sections of the exam this information will help you place.



This section is divided as follows:

- 1) Research notes on Stanislavski's collaboration with other practitioners
- 2) Consolidation questions to cement the knowledge you have gained from the research
- 3) Extended research activities to encourage further research into Stanislavski's work
- 4) Practical activities to enable you to further explore Stanislavski's collaborations

The focus AO for this section is: AO2 how others 'apply theatrical skills to performance'.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Stanislavski's Collaboration with Other Practitioners: Research

Over the years, **Stanislavski collaborated with a great number of other theatre practitioners**. **Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, with whom he began the Moscow Arts Theatre, whom he declared to be his successor when he died.** This section will focus on those practitioners that Stanislavski directed on numerous occasions and who fit with the position of realist that he chose to align himself, and one theatre practitioner whose ideas were a long way from Stanislavski's is to show the way that Stanislavski simultaneously aligned himself closely with (realism) and challenged himself to look beyond the horizons of that movement. Stanislavski's life-long attempts to develop his ideas did not become stagnant, but

Playwrights

The Moscow Arts Theatre was instrumental in promoting the works of new Russian playwrights. Two key playwrights favoured by the MAT were Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorki.



Chekhov

Chekhov began writing while still at school. His father had overstretched the family's finances and that, combined with having been cheated by one of the contractors he had paid to build them a house, meant the family was bankrupt and destitute. Chekhov had to fund his own education and one of the ways he did this was by writing for the local papers. This gave him the years to more and more writing both for papers and for the theatre. He also wrote several short stories.

His first play, *Marriage Proposal* (or *The Proposal* depending on the translation) and *The Bear*. His most famous play is *The Seagull* and it is this play which brought him into contact with Stanislavski.

In 1896, *The Seagull* opened in St Petersburg. The first night was an unmitigated disaster. Chekhov swore he would not write for theatre again. However **Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, partner at the MAT and a friend of Chekhov's had seen the production and loved it, and he persuaded Chekhov to allow the MAT to stage the performance.**

The MAT's production of *The Seagull* was a success. **Stanislavski used his psychological approach, enabling an exposition of the subtext as well as the text, creating a more interesting performance for the audience.** Stanislavski produced a detailed directorial score, printed with the text of his play. This directorial score allowed the nuances of the play to be shown even when they weren't explicit in the script. This led to Chekhov's plays henceforth being specifically for premieres at the MAT. **The three plays he wrote for them before (performed in 1899), *Three Sisters* (performed in 1901) and *The Cherry Orchard* (performed in 1904).**

Chekhov and Stanislavski's relationship was not always smooth, as revealed in the case of the actor Knipper, who was an actor at the MAT. They were often at odds. Chekhov stayed in St Petersburg while Knipper was in Moscow at the MAT, a situation that suited Chekhov as he did not want a wife who changed his lifestyle or who was in his way.

'By all means, I will be married if you wish it. But on these conditions: even if I am married, I will remain in Moscow—that is, she must live in Moscow while I live in the country.'¹⁰

Exam Tip
Realist playwrights like Stanislavski can also be seen as partners in the development of the realist theatre.

In your essay, Stanislavski's realist theatre is your chosen partner.

'Analysing different productions together' (A Level context)

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



¹⁰ http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6408-h/6408-h.htm#link2H_4_0066 The Project Gutenberg by Anton Chekhov, accessed 05/1/2017

In their letters, Chekhov and Knipper often swapped complaints about Stanislavski giving advice to each other on their work.

For Stanislavski, his work with Chekhov was central to his development of the system. It forced Stanislavski to develop his notion of subtext, as Chekhov steadfastly refused to reveal the nature of his characters, and yet was happy to deconstruct and denigrate his characters as wrong, if their interpretation was not the same as his own.

Stanislavski's work also renewed Chekhov's interest in writing for the theatre, as is seen in *The Seagull* and before his death, the publication of Chekhov's work in play scripts. **Chekhov died until his death, the leading playwright at the MAT.** Chekhov's death in 1904, greatly seemed to mark a turning point in the relationship between him and Nemirovich-Danchenko, and their visions began to move further apart.

Maxim Gorki

Another playwright who is inextricably linked with Stanislavski and the MAT is Maxim Gorki.

Gorki was one of the many pen names used by Alexei Maximovich Peshkov, a man with a troubled past and a strong political view. He believed that literature and art had the capacity for political change and that that was how it should be used. Much of his writing throughout his life had a political message, be that overt or implicit.

His work was popular with both the underclasses and the academics as he was often talking about Marxist socialist values – the share of wealth between all by the uprooting of the workers and their overthrowing of the upper classes. It is this that led him to become friends with many of the post-revolutionary leaders, including Lenin.

Gorki was a friend of Chekhov's and it was envisaged Gorki taking over from Chekhov at the MAT. However, despite having successfully premiered two of his plays in 1902, *The Lower Depths*, the third, *The Sun*, was highly political and controversial and its premiere at the MAT in 1905.

Gorki's influence on Stanislavski can be traced to the decision to stage Gorki's play *The Lower Depths*, which divided between realism and naturalism and led to further divisions between Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko. **Stanislavski was up until this point, against overtly political theatre** and the actor's job to tell the audience what to think, but to be honest and if that honesty revealed themselves to the audience then so be it, but this wish to use theatre to do so and to make political judgments, should not be the aim of the actor.

When Stanislavski worked on *The Lower Depths*, however, he felt that he tried to balance **between the play and the current political climate.** (1902, leading up to the 1905 Revolution) his directorship was a failure.

The Lower Depths is also much more in the tradition of naturalism than realism, focusing on the underclasses, and the seemingly inescapable nature of their situation. It forced Stanislavski to develop realism which he was developing with the influence of naturalism. However, due to Stanislavski's disputes over the directorial style of this play, Nemirovich-Danchenko's influence was reduced.

In 1911, both Stanislavski and Gorki were on the island of Capri convalescing. When Gorki wrote his drafts for the system. They discussed working together again, and although of their combined ideas fell into the work which happened in the First Studio, was a key rehearsal technique.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



After criticising Lenin, Gorki spent many years in Italy, knowing living in the USSR had difficulties and possibly risk death or imprisonment for have criticised the party. He became friends with Stalin, and it was at his request that Gorki returned to the USSR. He was given many privileges, including housing, the renaming of a Moscow street and a Russian passport. **In 1932 as a method of controlling Stanislavski by Stalin, the MAT was renamed the Moscow Art Theatre and a 'red director' was installed. The red director was intended to ensure the theatre's revolutionary activities.** Stanislavski attempted to appease the political powers but this meant **the MAT produced work only in a Soviet style, which limited its creative freedom.**

In more modern times, the MAT split into two factions, one called itself the Chekhov Theatre, the other the Gorki Moscow Art Theatre, both of which still exist.



Edward Gordon Craig

Edward Gordon Craig was a British theatre practitioner who first introduced in 1908. Craig was famed for his work in stage design. His outlook was that the actor was not important, but the tools a director could use to communicate his theatre.

When Stanislavski was introduced to Craig, he was very interested in his ideas and invited Craig to work on *Hamlet* with him. Perhaps Stanislavski was unaware of Craig's ideas, or perhaps he was keen to show how successful his internal characterisation could be in any performance. He wrote a letter to his friend Liubov Gurevich, that he wanted to work with Craig so that he might create a deeper and clearer sense of character through experimentation with other forms.

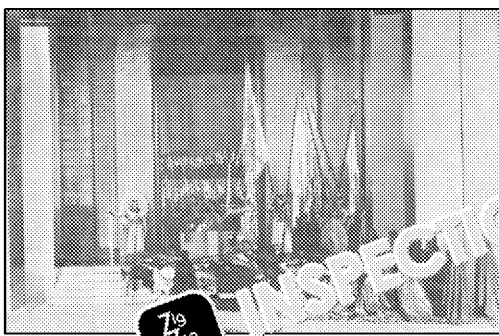
Craig himself thought that staging *Hamlet* was impossible. He was of the opinion that Shakespeare was poetry rather than drama and as such wanted to test out his theory that Shakespeare did not work on the stage. **Both men came at this collaboration in an unusual and oppositional way.**

This continued through the design and rehearsal process. Where Stanislavski saw that the piece should be played in a symbolic way and wanted to have a lot of symbolic characters, such as death on stage, Craig wanted the internal realism of the characters in the performance. **When Craig suggested that *Hamlet* be done in a more realistic way throughout the performance, Stanislavski overruled him.**

Exam Tip

Keep in mind that Craig was a stage designer, not a practitioner. He was interested in the way of doing things, not the dramatic content. Stanislavski wrote down his ideas about the relationship between the actor and the character, which Stanislavski used in his work.

Another difficulty that the production had was that Craig did not speak Russian. The production was conducted in a combination of German, which Stanislavski spoke, English and a little French. The cast found it very difficult to work with Craig. Combining this with Craig and Stanislavski's different views on the role of actors, meant the cast found a lot of the process very challenging. **Craig saw actors as 'puppets', that is completely under the control and direction of the director. He believed that actors should be like puppets, techniques taught them to think for themselves as if they were the character.**



In contrast to Stanislavski's usual preference for a simple stage, Craig's design for the final performance was a simple stage with the addition of different screens for different scenes. **He wanted stage hands to change the set during the performance, so that the audience could see the change in the set and the curtain was shut at each change.** Craig also changed the size and shape of the stage. The stage was painted in gold and cream and this was intended to reflect Hamlet's state of mind. The interior of Elsinore palace was painted in gold and cream. Coloured lights were used to change the colour of the buildings were cream. Coloured lights were used to change the colour of the buildings were cream.

Craig allowed the stage to be the blue of the sky or the grey of dusk, as necessary. The stage was used symbolically in the costume.

The performance, which finally took place in 1912, had a mixed reception. The reaction was positive, although some did praise the MAT for trying new ideas. The media in general was much more positive.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Stanislavski's Collaboration with Other Practitioners: Consolidation

Activity One: What Have You Learnt?

i	Individual	30 minutes	No extra resources
----------	------------	------------	--------------------

- 1) Which element of the system did Stanislavski's work on Chekhov's plays help?
- 2) Create a timeline plotting the various performances of Chekhov's, Gorki's and Gordon Craig to show the artistic development of Stanislavski at the MAT.
- 3) List three things Gordon Craig and Stanislavski differed about.

Things in which Stanislavski and Gordon Craig differed	Way in which

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Stanislavski's Collaboration with Other Practitioners: Extended

Activity One: Research Another Practitioner

i	Individual	1 – 1.5 hours	Access to research resources
----------	------------	---------------	------------------------------

Research one of the other practitioners that Stanislavski worked with, for example Danchenko or Vsevolod Meyerhold. Briefly outline the work they did together and the other.

Present your findings to your teacher in the form of an extra sub-section which completes the workbook. Try to use a professional style, with key elements highlighted, pictures and diagrams.

Activity Two: Design

Look again at the picture of Gordon Craig's design (below). In what ways does it differ from Stanislavski's design? Write your answer by labelling the picture below, showing the elements which they differ.



COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Stanislavski's Collaboration with Other Practitioners: Practical

Activity One: Naturalism

i	Groups	30 minutes
---	--------	------------

In keeping with the fact that *The Lower Depths* is a naturalistic play rather than a detailed stage directions. In groups of eight (or nine if you would like to have a scene opening to the first act as described in the stage directions below.

Obviously in a drama classroom this will be less naturalistic than you could create. **important thing to think about is the positioning specified for each character.** Use other appropriate props if you have access to, to create as much of a feel as you can.

The Lower Depths, Maxim Gorki

THE FIRST ACT

SCENE. A cave-like cellar. The ceiling is arched, grimy, with the plaster peeling off. A square window high up in the right wall. The right corner is partitioned off with a door. Close to the door of this room are BOOBNOFF'S sleeping planks. In left of the stone wall left is the kitchen door, where KVASHNYA, the BARON, and NASTYA between the stove and the door, is a large bed with dirty print curtains. Sleeping front by the left wall is a block of wood with a vice, and an anvil, also another low

(On the lower block KLESSHTSH is seated trying keys into old locks. At his feet are miscellaneous keys, strung on wire rings, a battered tin samovar, hammer, and pick. In the shelter are a large table, two seats, a stool, all dirty and of plain wood. KVASHNYA sits by the samovar, the BARON is chewing some black bread. NASTYA is on the table, reading a tattered book. In the bed, behind the curtains, ANNA lies coughing. BOOBNOFF lies on planks with an old hat shape between his legs, considering how he shall deal with his trousers. Scattered about him are a pair of pincers, some pieces of buckram, a rag. BOOBNOFF goes off to sleep on his planks. BOOBNOFF is in his sleep. The ACTOR, out of sight, tosses and turns. (It is an early morning.)

Activity Two: Monologues

i	Individual	45 minutes + performance
---	------------	--------------------------

Considering all you know so far about Stanislavski's approach to acting, work on a monologue below, taken from *The Seagull* by Chekhov.

Remember one of the things that Stanislavski famously did with *The Seagull* was to take notes about all of the visual, aural and spatial elements. A good starting point with a monologue, therefore, would be to create a detailed set of notes about how you

Once you are ready, perform your monologue to the class and ask them to feedback on the honesty, truth and depth of your characterisation.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



The Seagull Anton Chekhov

Nina is an actress. She has returned after a few years to the home of her ex-boyfriend, and how she spent the years away from him.

NINA

Why do you say you kiss the ground I walk on? I ought to be killed. I'm so tired, I can't rest. I am the seagull... No, that's not it. I'm an actress! That doesn't matter. So he didn't believe in the theatre, he laughed at my dreams, and little by little, I stopped believing in my heart. And always the strains of love, and always the constant fear for the child... I became an actress without thinking or feeling. I don't know what to do with my hands, I can't control my voice. You can't imagine how it's like to know you're acting badly! I am a seagull, you know. You know that at my feet, he came to me and said, 'I had an idea. As you like yourself, I'll make you all her life on the shores of a lake. She loves the lake, like a seagull by chance, and because he has nothing better to do, destroys her...'

What was I talking about, before? I – Yes, about acting. I'm not like that anymore. I act with delight, with rapture. I feel drunk when I'm on stage and think that I am wonderful. I've been walking around, walking around and thinking, thinking and even believing in myself every day. Now I see at last, Kostya, that in our kind of work, whether we're writing or acting, the thing is not fame, or glory, not what I used to dream about, but learning how to live and have faith. If I have faith, it doesn't hurt so much, and when I think of my career, it doesn't matter.

When you see him, don't tell him anything... I do love him, yes, I love him more than anything. He's my subject for a short story.'

How sweet it used to be, Kostya! Remember? How bright, and warm, how joyous. The feelings we had for each other were like fine, delicate flowers! Do you remember?

The Seagull Anton Chekhov

Treplev has a very complex relationship with his mother, who is a famous actress. He is now an adult. Treplev is a playwright, but abhors current theatre. In his monologue, he addresses his mother, Nina. At the start of it, he is pulling the petals off a flower.

TREPLEV:

She loves me, she loves me not; she loves me, she loves me not; she loves me, she loves me not. My mother doesn't love me. Of course not! She wants to live, to love, to wear bright dresses. She's five years old, a constant reminder that she is no longer young. When I'm not there, she's forty-three – and for that, she hates me. Besides, she knows I don't love her. She loves the theatre, she thinks she is serving humanity and the sacred cause of art, but the theatre of today is hidebound and conventional. When the curtain goes up, and, in a room full of light, those great geniuses, those priests of holy art, show me how people eat, drink, and wear their jackets; when from those banal scenes and phrases they try to fish out a moment of beauty, easily grasped and suitable for domestic use; when, in a thousand variations, I am over and over again – then I flee, as Maupassant fled from the Eiffel Tower, which was too vulgar.¹²

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



¹¹ The Seagull, Chekhov, A taken from: <http://notmyshoes.net/monologues/nina.html>

¹² The Seagull, Chekhov, A taken from: <http://notmyshoes.net/monologues/treplev.html>

Activity Three: Actor or Director in Control?

i	Pairs → fours	30 minutes + performance	No extra resources
----------	---------------	--------------------------	--------------------

For this activity, you are going to work in a pair and then in a four, swap partners need to create a performance piece where the director advises, but the actor takes the final piece.

Then with your second partner, the actor must be a marionette for the director.

Perform both pieces to the class and discuss the pros and cons of each method of

Old	Modern
HAMLET To be, or not to be? That is the question— Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, And, by opposing, end them? To die, to sleep— No more—and by a sleep to say we end The heartache and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir to—'tis a consummation Devoutly to be wished! To die, to sleep. To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub, For in that sleep of death what dreams may come When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause. There's the respect That makes calamity of so long life.	The question is, is it better to be Is it more honourable to put up All the bad things that luck throw Or to fight back And end everything? To die is like — Nothing more — and by dying w The heartache and troubles Of the living body — that's a thing To wish sincerely for! To die is to To sleep in the hope you might die In that sleep of death, what kind When we have died That makes us think. That's the That makes us put up with this as

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



8: *Stanislavski's Influence Practitioners*

This section of the study pack explores Stanislavski's influence with other practitioners, both during his lifetime and up to the present day. The activities help you to explore his influence and how it has shaped modern theatre. There are also tips showing which specific sections of the exam this information will help you to explore.

This section is divided as follows:

- 1) Research notes on Stanislavski's influence on other practitioners.
- 2) Consolidation questions to cement the knowledge you have gained from reading the research notes.
- 3) Extended research activities to encourage further research into Stanislavski's influence.
- 4) Practical activities to enable you to further explore the influence of Stanislavski.

The focus AO for this section is: AO1 how others 'making connections between theory and practice'.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Stanislavski's Influence on Other Practitioners: Research Notes

Why is Stanislavski influential?

Michael Billington said in *The Guardian* that **Stanislavski is 'undoubtedly the greatest acting and – despite everything that's changed in the last century – what he has to say that while modern acting has moved on past the system, and there are many other theatres, Stanislavski is massively important, whether or not you use his techniques, you have to know them.**

Stanislavski's influence was of course even during his lifetime, not only in his home country but worldwide.

Russia



Stanislavski's influence on theatre in Russia was profound at the time and continues to be. He founded the Moscow Arts Theatre, which still exists today, albeit in two separate facades, studios where his acting system was taught and was one of the driving forces behind the Russian arts.

Europe

Stanislavski and the Moscow Arts Theatre influence reached further than just Russia. **tour around Europe.** Between the 1890s and the 1917 revolution, Russian art was popular in the USA. The MATs tour was a part of this and was a resounding success. It was after a holiday in Finland and began working on a psychological approach to acting. **At the end of the tour, Stanislavski and the MAT began in 1922**, during which he discussed the possibilities of a new theatre school.

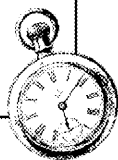
The USA

Following directly on from the second European tour, Stanislavski went to the USA. An important time in the legacy of Stanislavski. **It was here he first tried to publish his system, however the US publishers rejected the proposal**, asking instead for an autobiography. Stanislavski wrote *My Life in Art*.

The other reason that this was key in the legacy of Stanislavski, is that **many US actors came to see what Europe had been doing and attended lectures and performances by the MAT.** People such as Lee Strasberg who would go on to develop his own, somewhat based heavily in parts on the Stanislavski system. Stanislavski's celebrity at this time was such that he even met the president of the United States, at the White House.

Exam Tip

For both your written exam and your portfolio, you have to acknowledge Stanislavski's influence. Ensure you show that you understand that method acting focuses on emotion, memory and elevates it above other things and don't muddle it with the broader focus of Stanislavski's system. (AS/A Level Component 1 and A Level Coursework 3)



Method acting

The development of the system was the creation of what is known as method acting. Some of the former students of Stanislavski's system stayed on after the tour in the USA. One of the most influential was Richard Boleslavsky, who set up the Laboratory and taught many of the techniques. His influence in American stage and film was huge. Strasberg and Stella Adler.

Strasberg and Adler went on to develop their own system, along with another member of the MAT, Sanford Meisner, are some of the most influential in the development of acting technique and the modern system.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



¹³ S is for Stanislavski, Michael Billington, *The Guardian*, 17th April 2012

Strasberg's method acting was developed from the form of the system, which St
1920s tour. It is one of the criticisms of method acting, that it focuses too heavily
 encourages actors to 'become' their character in an all-consuming and potentially

Stella Adler worked alongside Strasberg, until in 1934 she worked with Stanislav
learned of the developments he had made to his techniques. At this point, she
 bringing the idea that an actor should not merely use memory, but also imagination

Meisner was another member of the Group Theatre, which had such wide influence
 understood Strasberg's focus purely on emotion memory to be too all-encompassing
 actors to consider the emotional and imagined improvisation of the text. **His technique**
focuses less on the individual character and more on the relationship with other

There are high profile film and theatre actors linked with all of these techniques.
 Brando, Warren Beatty, James Dean and Robert De Niro. There are many more
 actors who are linked with the various techniques and teachers. It is not always
 they are most linked to, and there is a level of mythology and mystery around some
is often linked to Lee Strasberg and method acting, however several sources say
Adler and disliked Strasberg's techniques.

The debate between Stanislavski followers and Brecht followers in the UK
From the 1950s until the 1970s, a debate raged in the theatres and drama schools
Stanislavski's system had been taught in acting schools, however the German theatre
had gained more and more followers and with the Berliner Ensemble, he had gained
 his theatrical approach which was set up to challenge the dominant theatre practice
 referred to as dramatic theatre.

Dramatic Theatre vs Epic Theatre	
Dramatic	Epic
Has a linear plot with a beginning, climax and resolution.	May start and stop at any point.
Recreation on stage for the audience to observe.	Makes the audience a witness to the action.
Suggests things to the audience.	Argues with the audience.
The audience shares the experiences.	The audience is outside the action.
Actors become the characters.	Actors demonstrate the characters.
Psychological.	Political.

Stanislavski had many well-known followers within British theatre, including John
 Michael Redgrave. However, there was a rising number of big names who felt more
 Brechtian model of epic theatre, including Laurence Olivier, Joan Littlewood and C

In the years following Stanislavski's death, there was a re-evaluation of the system
 become set in stone and to some, dogmatic, since Stanislavski was no longer around
 Berliner Ensemble, which visited London in 1955, the year of Brecht's death, seemed
 comparison.

In fact, the system and its practitioners seem to have survived. Modern drama
 variety of approaches, including both training in the system and epic theatre among

**COPYRIGHT
 PROTECTED**

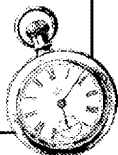


TV realism

The continual popularity of realism and many of the elements of the system, is at least partly due to the fact that **most TV and film drama still uses a psychological realism approach**. TV drama is more escapist and extends the fourth wall and suspension of disbelief, past the level of theatre as the audience really is looking in on characters who cannot see and do not know (most TV programmes) acknowledge them.

Exam Tip

For your devising component you need to show that you 'know how' to create a system developed in a different social, historical and cultural context. Your system can be understood and adapted to a contemporary age and audience (see Level component 1 p. 13). You could write about how you made Stanislavski's methodology relevant for your audience, in your portfolio.



The system continues

Stanislavski did not seem to have a **systematic approach to theatre**. Although he developed a system that could train actors, many elements of the system seem to have become stagnant. **Perhaps the curriculum could explore his theories alongside those of other directors, allowing actors and directors to choose the elements that best suit them, and the elements of which he would have been most proud.**

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Stanislavski's Influence on Other Practitioners: Consolidation

Activity One: What Have You Learnt?

- 1) When did the MAT go on tour around Europe and why was a European tour of performers of Europe?
- 2) Which book was Stanislavski asked to write when on tour in the USA and how did it influence his ideas?
- 3) Complete the table below showing key figures who took Stanislavski's ideas on and how they influenced British theatre practice.

Name	When did they meet Stanislavski?	Which elements of his ideas did they take on?

- 4) Which two theatre practitioners divided British theatre practice between the 1920s and 1930s?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Stanislavski's Influence on Other Practitioners: Extended Research

Activity One: The Epic/Dramatic Debate in the UK

i	Individual	30 minutes	Access to research resources
----------	------------	------------	------------------------------

Pick one of the actors mentioned as championing the system in Britain during the epic theatre. Create an information sheet about him/her including information such as written and/or directed, theatres they worked with, any film credits and any other find related to their career in theatre.

Activity Two: Research into Epic Theatre

i	Individual	30 minutes	No extra resources
----------	------------	------------	--------------------

Research further into epic theatre. See the table in the consolidation questions and contrast epic theatre with Stanislavski's theatre. Identify areas of it that Brecht did

Class discussion:

Which theatrical form do you prefer and why? Why is it successful? Is each one better for a certain type of play? Which do you think audiences expect today? Is there anything about combining elements of both styles to create something new?

Activity Three: Mini Documentary Project: Method Acting in the USA

i	Group	45 minutes	Research resources
----------	-------	------------	--------------------

In a small group, research the questions below and then use this information to create a mini documentary. You could take on different roles, with one person being a key figure from Group Theatre and the Actors studio.

- Who founded the Group Theatre?
- Where was the Group Theatre based?
- How long did the Group Theatre run for?
- What reasons can be given for the demise of the Group Theatre?
- When was the Actors Studio formed?
- Who formed the Actors Studio?
- Who was the artistic director of the Actors Studio from 1951–1982?

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Stanislavski's Influence on Other Practitioners: Practical Activities

Activity One: Characterisation Class

i Individual → class	30 minutes + prior research time	No extra resources
-----------------------------	----------------------------------	--------------------

One of the areas of method acting which is both admired and criticised is the detail of the characterisation. Your class is going to create an imaginary location called 'the staff room' at a school or college staff room. Before the improvisation, you need to create a detailed list of the behaviours of teachers. You should collect ideas from observation, discussion and perhaps, if you can, a trip to the staff room or places teacher 'hang out'!

With your detailed list of behaviours, you are then going to spend 15 minutes, as a class, to create a character. You will then perform to your teacher (and any other teachers who you may want to give you feedback about how realistic your characterisation was.

Activity Two: Immersion Rehearsing

i Individual	1 lesson + time to create extra info	No extra resources
---------------------	--------------------------------------	--------------------

Another strategy often adopted by actors who follow method acting is total immersion. You will be given the roles below and, for the lesson, become it. Try to continue your normal interaction with the character you have chosen.

The roles are outlined below, however, they need some extra information to create dimensional characters we expect from a piece of realism. You should therefore add extra information to your character, by completing the 'extra information' section below. Consider family life, likes, dislikes, activities in and out of school. Give special consideration to the character you have created the personality traits outlined in the role information.

Once you have completed the extra information, you will continue your normal interaction with the character. Try to continue your reactions in terms of your character. Try to 'become' the character, and behave 'as if' you were the character.

Roles

Character one: You are timid and shy. You are very quiet and afraid of how others will judge you. You are very nervous in social interaction and would rather be alone than in large groups. You want to do well in school but find it very difficult, although when people get to know you, you are very friendly.

Character two:

You are very confident. You are popular and friendly. You always have something to say, even if it is cheeky, but you usually manage to turn it around so that people are rarely cross with you. You are always friendly.

Character three:

You have a very large dose of teenage hormones. Other people are almost exclusively attracted to you. You have a very short temper and do not like people telling you what to do. You come from a very wealthy background.

Character four:

You are very intelligent. You find school work easy. Sometimes this makes school boring. You have to find other ways to entertain yourself, such as asking the teacher awkward questions or teasing your classmates. This does not always make you popular.

Character five:

You would be anywhere other than school/college. You hate school/college but when you were asked to look at an apprenticeship it looked like too much hard work was better.

Feedback

At the end of your lesson in character, have a 10 minute feedback session about how you felt about becoming the character? What challenges did you come across? What did you learn from the experience?

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Exam Preparation

The information you have read, researched and used in the previous chapters can be used in your AS and A Level theatre studies. Practitioners and their ideas are useful in several sections. Below is a short guide to exactly how and where you can use the knowledge you have gained for practical purposes. Also, don't forget the 'Exam Tip' boxes which were dotted throughout the book.

At AS and A Level, you have to show that you can apply theory (what you have read and research you have done) with practical and/or design work. You also have to show how you have used Stanislavski's methodology in your own work. If you have done all the practical work, you are ready to start doing this.

AS Level

Your practitioner knowledge is assessed in both the performance and portfolio sections: Exploration and Performance.

You are expected to show that you understand:

- That practitioners did and continue to change the way theatre is performed.
- Your text, both in terms of how it was originally performed and also through the lens of Stanislavski.
- Both theoretical and practical elements of Stanislavski's system and work.

You are expected to rehearse, perform and analyse.

How could you do this?

- You could use Stanislavski's rehearsal technique to get into character.
 - Create a large mind map showing all the given circumstances you have gleaned from the text.
 - In your performance groups, do improvisations where you imagine your character in a given situation and use Magic If to decide how they would react.
 - Analyse your text, splitting it into units and objectives and also coming up with a plan for your character.
 - Spend some time considering the emotions that your character has during the text. Explore and remember moments in your life where you experienced similar emotions. Find an object, piece of music or smell that evokes that emotion in you and spend time with it. You can then apply it to the appropriate moment in the script.
- You could create detailed directorial scores, like Stanislavski.
 - As designer, you could create a detailed score showing all the setting, props and costumes you wish to include.
 - Keep a log of any ideas you have along with your justification for them from the text to show your progression of ideas.
- You can evaluate your choices based on how far they match or develop Stanislavski's system.
 - Create a table into which you put key decisions you make during your development. Add a column where you discuss in what ways the decision matches Stanislavski's system. You feel it develops it for a current audience.

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



A Level

Your practitioner knowledge is assessed through both the performance and portfolio. Component 1: Devising, and the exam question about interpreting a text for a modern audience. Makers in Practice. For A Level, you need to study two practitioners.

Component 1: Devising

You are expected to understand:

- How a new piece of theatre can be devised using the ideas, style and conventions of a chosen practitioner.
- How methods devised in different social, historical and cultural contexts can be adapted for a modern audience.
- How to apply the methodology of your chosen practitioner to your work.

If you choose Stanislavski for this component, you must:

- Make sure Stanislavski's influence is clear in the style of performance.
- Make sure Stanislavski is evidenced in your portfolio.

How could you do this in your devised piece?

If you choose Stanislavski for this component, you could:

- Use Stanislavski's stage conventions, and those of realism in your performance.
 - Come up with a realistic and truthful scheme for the props and costumes.
 - Ensure that all action on stage is done with purpose and honesty.
 - In your groups, run a section of your performance using purposefully staged action. Try to run the same section avoiding any kinds of clichéd action. Ask your audience to identify the clichés.
- Apply some of the elements of Stanislavski's system to the rehearsal process.
 - In your performance groups, run improvisations where you imagine your characters and situation and use Magic IF to decide how they would react.
 - Go through your stimulus text, breaking it down into units and objectives. Which would be interesting to explore further in your devising?
 - Although a devised piece does not have a script, you can still apply units and objectives to your performance by breaking down the scenes you create and ensuring that each character has an objective and that there is an overall super-objective for the piece.
- Show some key moments from Stanislavski's own work within your devised piece.
 - Look at some of the play texts that the MAT performed under Stanislavski's influence (*Lower Depths*, Gorki; *Hamlet*, Shakespeare, etc.) and see if you could incorporate elements into your devised piece.
 - Improvise conversations between Stanislavski and other key figures in the history of theatre (Strasberg; Gorki; Bertolt Brecht). Make notes on the elements which stood out to you and how they are informing your devised piece.
- You might adapt a text or sections of a text into the style of realism.
 - Read an extract of a non-naturalistic play by a playwright such as Bertolt Brecht, Caryl Phillips, Steven Berkoff and stage it as naturalistically as possible. What becomes of the change in style?

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



How could you do this in your portfolio?

If you choose Stanislavski for this component, you must:

- Evidence your exploration of Stanislavski.
 - Go through the chapters of this resource, noting down elements from each devised piece.
 - Make a list of 10 things you have learnt about Stanislavski and his techniques to explore further during devising.
- Show that you can make and analyse connections between Stanislavski and your performance.
 - Make a list of the aims and objectives you have for your performance and link with the techniques.
- Show how your own response to the practitioner changed and developed through devising.
 - Keep detailed notes and records of all the decisions you make and all the techniques that are not used in the final piece.
 - When you start devising, make a list of everything you think and know about your approach to theatre. Do the same again at the end of your performance.

Component 3: Theatre Makers in Practice

You need to show that you understand:

- The link between theory and practice.
- The link between performance, theory and social/historical/cultural context.
- The methodology of your chosen practitioner.
- How your chosen practitioner chose to convey meaning.
- Your chosen practitioner's artistic intentions.
- The use of theatrical styles and conventions by your chosen practitioner.
- Your chosen practitioner's collaboration with and influence on other practitioners.
- Your chosen practitioner's theory and practice in terms of relationships with other practitioners.
- How your practitioner influenced the path of drama and theatre.
- How the practitioner's methodologies might influence a performance of your own.

How can you do this in your exam?

If you choose Stanislavski for this component, you must:

- Discuss how Stanislavski's methodologies can be applied to your text.
 - Revision tip: Make a set of cards containing 10 key ideas which sum up Stanislavski's methodologies. With a partner, take it in turns to turn over the top card and give a link to a text which would link well to this idea.
- Discuss how Stanislavski's methodologies apply to the theatrical element named in the question.
 - Revision tip: Go through past and/or specimen papers and for each one named element in the centre and appropriate links to Stanislavski's concepts on the outside.

Don't forget the Assessment Objectives:

- A01** Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning as part of the theatre-making process (Assessed in: component 1)
- A02** Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance (Assessed in: group performance/devised performance and monologue/duologue & component 3)
- A03** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is created (Assessed in: Component 3, A Level, Interpreting a Performance Text)
- A04** Analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others (Assessed in: component 3 portfolio)

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Answers

Answers 1: The Life and Times of Konstantin Stanislavski

Consolidation questions 1

- 1) Students may choose a variety of different events and moments in the life of Stanislavski for their ability to select events appropriately, and for their ability to explain how influential in Stanislavski's development. Some excellent explanations have been given, and any worthy answer.

Answers might include:

- Birth into a rich family
- Example comment regarding influence: He had the luxury of a good education and therefore could afford to have leisure time for acting/theatre.
- Grandfather being an actress
- Example comment regarding influence: The family was already interested in acting/theatre world. He would have had access to contacts and experience.
- Father's love of theatre
- Theatre spaces being built in his childhood home
- Taking part in amateur theatre
- Leaving school before completing studies
- Becoming a successful businessman
- Going to the Moscow Theatre School and leaving again
- The Maly Theatre
- Dislike of melodrama
- The Society of Art and Literature
- Starting the Moscow Arts Theatre
- Meeting Gorki and Chekhov
- Marrying and having children
- The Theatre Studios
- 1905 revolution
- Going on international tour
- World War I
- 1917 revolution
- State funding for the MAT
- Writing and receiving state funding for the MAT
- Travelling to Europe and America
- Writing his autobiography
- Having a heart attack
- Being in internal exile
- Stalin's purges

- 2) Answers may include:

- Theatre in decline
- Theatres as commercial
- Art less important than money
- Over-stylised conventions
- Speech declaimed
- Actors using clichéd movements
- Decisions on costume, set and movement made because that is what was always done
- Actors didn't learn lines
- Over use of a prompter

- 3)

Russia: at Stanislavski's birth	Russia: at Stanislavski's death
Julian Calendar	Gregorian Calendar
Serfdom just abolished but still massive difference between rich and the poor and a peasant underclass whose work supported the life and position of the rich	Money of the rich reduced
No work and condition rights: unions illegal	Regions run by council
Could not rise through class system	Many intellectuals or nobles killed in the purges
Autocratic monarchy	Ruled by Stalin (effectively)

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Extended research activities 1

Activity One

How the groups of students present their findings is up to them, although a focus on precise and concise information is usual for an infographic. The following is some indicative content:

- **Peasant:** Most of the population lived in extreme poverty; most lived a rural agricultural life; in 1861, but still only able to rent (at high cost) land from the nobility; poor standards of living; isolated rural communities; could move to the city and work in a factory, but conditions were poor for most, although some factory owners did provide (very) basic healthcare.
- **Tradesman:** A very small group in Russia: formed what we might call the middle class; involved in business and trade; increased with the industrialisation of Russia in the 1890s; they would be widely travelled; comfortable lifestyle; owned and ran the factories.
- **Noble:** Very comfortable lifestyle; landowners; conservative political views; wanted to maintain the status quo; the biggest and most powerful group; inherited land and titles; the Tsar could also be considered a noble.

Part two/ three: Answers may include:

- Stanislavski may have felt the levels of inequality to be unfair and to want to use his position to help the poor.
- Stanislavski may have wanted to use his family's wealth and power for good.
- Stanislavski may have seen theatre as a tool for political change.
- Stanislavski may have seen a new audience as more open to a new style of theatre.
- Other answers, which can be justified, may be just as valid.

Activity Two

8–10 points about melodrama.

Answers may include:

- Sensational
- Appeals to the emotion
- From melo – music and drame – drama
- Happy ending
- Unrealistic
- Extreme behaviours
- Caricatures/Stereotypes/Archetypes/Stock characters
- Lack of detailed characterisation
- Plot more important than characterisation
- Lacks subtlety
- Often predictable
- Stock characters
- Stock settings

Part two: Students may mention pantomime or various comedies (especially sitcoms), musicals, operas or children's television to melodrama.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Answers 2: An Overview of Stanislavski's Work

Consolidation questions 2

1)

Book	Date published in the USA	Date published in Russia	Pre/post death publication?	Ideas
<i>My Life in Art</i>	1924	1925	Before his death	The first translated interpretation of his work, which was not very accurate
<i>An Actor Prepares</i>	1936	1938	Russian ed. after his death	As above, but with more response to his ideas
<i>Building a Character</i>	1949	1955	Well after his death	Over 10 years after his death, the book was published in the USSR, but it was not very popular at the time. It was later on that it became more popular
<i>Creating a Role</i>	1961	1957	Well after his death	Russian edition more popular than the English one, but it has not been translated into English

- 2)
1. Kostya and Tortsov
 2. This allowed Stanislavski to show the system from the perspective of both a teacher and a student. It allowed him to explore things in a practical way, rather than as an academic. He felt important, even when they didn't fit with the political situation of Russia. It was a fictional young actor, rather than Stanislavski himself.

3)

Name	Aims
Society of Art and Literature	Like a school of actors; beginning of Stanislavski's system
Moscow Arts Theatre	To create a true ensemble; discipline of actors; to be a kind of audience
First Studio	To experiment with new theatre ideas
Second Studio	To work on the teaching elements of his system
Open dramatic studio	To train actors in the system; to be his legacy

Extended research activities 2

Activity One: Indicative content:

<i>The Seagull by Anton Chekhov</i>	
What is the play about?	It is a play about four characters, an actress, two writers and a landowner who is also an amateur actress. The play explores romantic conflicts.
When was the play first performed and how was it received?	First performed 17 October 1896 and it was a disaster. The audience and Chekhov said he would give up writing.
What was different about the MAT production of <i>The Seagull</i> ?	Nemirovich-Danchenko, Stanislavski's partner in the MAT, directed the play. Stanislavski created a detailed inner action and the actors tried to complement the external action. Everyone was very nervous about the performance, but it was a success.
Any other interesting facts about the MAT production of <i>The Seagull</i> ?	Chekhov did not see the performance until 1 May 1897. The play was performed in December 1898; probably because he was not as much of a disaster as the first production. The Moscow Art Theatre still has the seagull as its emblem. Chekhov apparently liked the <i>mis en scène</i> and the performance of the character of Trigorin.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Activity Two: Jean Benedetti said 'if Stanislavski had "been a 'natural', ... there would you think this might be true?

There are a number of ways in which to answer this question, but some indicative com

- The fact that Stanislavski understood what it was to find something hard and was
- That Stanislavski was always striving to make his own performances better
- That people who are naturally good at things often find it difficult to explain the
- Stanislavski found when he asked actors he admired for their advice)
- Had he been a natural he wouldn't have needed the system himself

To explore this idea further and evidence their ideas, you could point students in the

- and books:
- <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/apr/16/stanislavski-man-method-sir>
 - <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/apr/17/modern-drama-konstantin-stanislavski>
 - *Stanislavski: An Introduction* by Jean Benedetti
 - *My Life in Art* by Konstantin Stanislavski

Answers to Stanislavski's Artistic Intentions

Consolidation questions

- 1) Expect an answer which in some way communicates the idea of: 'A set of rules, that does in language: as a set of guidelines which help to create, shape and clarify im
- 2) Expect an answer which talks about:
 - i. Subtext
 - ii. Internal thoughts and external actions
 - iii. Back story
 - iv. Personal experience
 - v. Staging and costume
 - vi. Acting in the same way they would if they were in that situation in real life
- 3) Answers should include some, or all, of the following ideas:
 - Just reproducing life on stage would be boring
 - Because actors would be so in tune with their characters' thoughts and feelings, they would appear natural
 - They behave as if they are the character
 - If the actor believes the character then the audience will too
- 4) Expect an answer which includes the following:
 - The hidden meanings in the text
 - Benedetti helped to create a more rounded and real character
- 5) Expect an answer which contains the following:
 - Costume and staging should create a sense of truth on stage
 - Enables actor and thus audience to believe the world created
- 6) Expect an answer which includes the following:
 - He was working with Vsevolod Meyerhold
 - This is strange because Meyerhold's ideas encouraged the actors to use their bodies to communicate without language and on a bare stage. This seems at odds with what Stanislavski encouraged.

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Extended research activities 3

Activity One: There are a wide range of potential correct answers for this, but expect and for which there is a rationale for every design decision.

Activity Two: There are a variety of possible answers to this, the following is one possible

Script	
<p><i>Dave has just returned from work. Suhkri is sitting on the sofa. Their eight-week-old baby is asleep on her chest. She looks shattered and is staring at the TV in front of her, although it is not on.</i></p> <p>Dave: Hi, Love. How was your day? Better than yesterday? [Cause] Did you see the NCT girls?</p> <p><i>Suhkri continues to stare ahead.</i></p> <p>Dave: Suhk?</p> <p>Suhkri: Oh [But she sob uncontrollably]</p> <p>Dave: Suhk, what's wrong? We can't keep doing this. I don't know how to help. I am exhausted. I have been at work all day. The day was mad. I didn't get any sleep last night. Suhk! I don't know what to do.</p> <p>Suhkri: I can't do this. Everyone else is a better mum than me. They understand their children. Their children sleep.</p> <p>Dave: He is asleep now!</p> <p>Suhkri: Oh yes, because that is what has happened all day. I have had a perfect sleeping angel and I could be a domestic goddess while you were hard at work being the man and bring home the bacon!</p> <p>Dave: That's not what I meant. <i>The baby begins to cry.</i></p> <p>Suhkri: And I don't even know what he needs! Is he tired? Is he hungry? I don't know. I thought mums were supposed to know. I don't know!</p> <p><i>Dave moves to hug the two of them. Suhkri passes him the baby and turns her back on them both.</i></p>	<p><i>Both children</i></p> <p><i>She has</i> <i>trying to</i> <i>something</i></p> <p><i>She has</i></p> <p><i>He does</i> <i>impotent</i> <i>cope, ex</i> <i>hard as</i></p> <p><i>Her day</i> <i>her part</i> <i>Stop co</i></p> <p><i>She feels</i> <i>serious</i> <i>unequal</i> <i>gender</i></p> <p><i>He is fr</i></p> <p><i>She feels</i> <i>unders</i></p> <p><i>Their re</i></p>



COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Activity Three: There are many ways in which students might answer the question, *How do these theatrical forms link to Stanislavski's work?*

	Key features	Possible
Theatre of Cruelty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A break from traditional Western theatre. • An active audience who are involved and engaged. • Against the idea of things becoming mundane and routine. • Felt only specific groups were being explored within theatre. • Interested in the subconscious. • To help audiences to purge destructive feelings and feel joy that they had repressed. • Felt that language was unable to communicate well enough so characters reverted to sound. • Audience at the centre and action taking place around. • No set/props/costume. • Overwhelm the audience with sound/light. 	<p>Stanislavski's own work was very routine in theatre; as a result it is probable that Stanislavski was against that too so the idea of the Theatre of Cruelty was a reaction to that.</p> <p>Stanislavski felt that the audience were certain groups and individuals.</p> <p>Stanislavski was very interested in the subconscious.</p> <p>Although Stanislavski was interested in realistic sets and costumes, the reality on stage is different from what he may well have developed with props and costume.</p>
Epic Theatre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges the theatre of the day. • Makes the audience alert. • Poses problems for the audience to solve. • Issues are unresolved in the performance. • Audience is encouraged to question what they are seeing and forces them to make decisions. • Makes the human being the object of enquiry. • Uses montage. • Each scene can stand alone. • The narrative may be broken up. 	<p>As Stanislavski's system was what had become routine, it became the norm, it was not what he would want to work with, it was to become a cliché.</p> <p>Stanislavski wanted to make the audience think, although this may have been more didactic than epic theatre, but it was similar.</p> <p>Stanislavski was very interested in the human being and therefore theatre was the object of enquiry.</p>
Theatre of the Absurd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions existence and things such as truth, morality and the meaning of life. • Characters who can't find a purpose in life. • May be satirical. • May be darkly humorous. • May be absurd. • May not have a clear plot structure. • May contain tragic or horrific elements. • Often aims to shock. • Often naturalistic language, however cliché or nonsense is often used to denote the confusion and/or meaningless of the characters' situation. 	<p>Stanislavski's interest in the human being well have developed the idea of truth.</p> <p>Stanislavski felt that the plot and absurdist theatre was to explore characters who were not like him.</p> <p>Stanislavski's interest in the human being could have led him to develop an engaging and educational theatre.</p>

Answers 4: The Innovative Nature of Stanislavski's Approach

Consolidation questions 4

- 1) The current theatre of the time: Melodrama
- 2) It is the director's notes showing what is at the heart of the scene, including setting, props, lighting, actor's movement and the actor's delivery.
- 3) Stanislavski's system and his way of working focused on using rehearsal to create a character and an action that could then be applied to direction, design and performance to represent life on stage, truthfully.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Extended research activities 4

Activity One: Create a mis en scène

This will be achieved differently by different students and for different script choices. Include information about many or all of the following:

- Staging
- Lighting
- Sound
- Costume
- Props
- Movement on stage
- Delivery of lines

Activity Two: Create a timeline of MAT Productions

Look for a timeline which plots the given productions in chronological order (*The Sea and the Sea*, 1911/12; *The Government Inspector*, Gogol, 1921; *Le Mariage de Figaro*, 1921) and adds two to three extra productions with notes about their successes and failures. Indicative content: (There are other productions which students may also select).

- 1898 – *The Merchant of Venice* (Shakespeare): A Shylock with a strong Yiddish accent, played positively and Stanislavski was accused of racism, as well as making the poetic language too literal.
- 1902 – *The Lower Depths* (Gorki): A great success. Considered a part of social realism, depicting the dire circumstances of the lower classes.
- 1909 – *A Month in the Country* (Ivan Turgenev): The first production using the technique of rehearsal, which was unpopular with the actors. The production was a success.

Answers 5: Stanislavski's Working Methods

Consolidation questions 5

Activity One

- 1) Stanislavski believed that rehearsal was key to the development of a great performance.
- 2) What do I do? Why do I do it? How do I do it?
- 3) Accept any appropriate style of directing, and which communicates the following:
 - Given circumstances taken from the text.
 - The text broken down into units and each of those units is given an objective.
 - The objectives are linked together to create the super-objective.
 - The context is informed by both the given circumstances and the objectives.

Activity Two

Accept appropriate answers for each rehearsal technique

Action: The physical actions of a character on stage.

Magic If: Behaving 'as if' you are the character.

Given Circumstances: The elements given to you in the script.

Imagination: What the actor brings to the text themselves, over and above what is written in the script.

Units and Objectives: The sections a script can be broken down into and the motivation for each unit.

Super-objective and Through-line of Action: The overarching motivation for the whole script and the manner in which this moves through the story.

Subtext: The hidden meaning behind the script.

Circle of Attention: Rehearsal technique where the actor focuses on the stage and becomes aware of the text, forgetting the audience.

Emotion Memory: Actors use their own past reactions to real events to bring truth and reality to their performance.

Tempo-rhythm: The pace and rhythm of the inner and outer life of the character.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**



Extended research activities 5

Activity One

Indicative content

Ensure units of action are broken in appropriate places and that all objectives are achieved by someone or something else.

e.g.

To show [another character] I am sad = correct

To cry = incorrect

Activity Two

Accept any answer which is well justified in terms of progression of character development.
Example: Given circumstances; subtext; units and objectives; imagination → I have chosen to start with what there is in the text (given circumstances), follow up with looking at the underlying meaning of the text (subtext) then having looked at what is in the text, I would move to splitting the text into units and then reasons for the actions of the character (objective), followed by using imagination to bring the character to life.

Activity Three

Accept any technique which is well matched with the character and the situation.
Example: Imagination – improvise the five minutes leading up to the script; then the day after the events which were important for the character leading up to the moment in the script.

Answers to the Performance Style and Theatrical Conventions**Consolidation Questions 6**

1) Realism

2)

Similarities	
Both use realistic setting/props/costume.	Realism wanted to create a realistic picture of life on stage; naturalism was more exactly on stage.
Both use realistic language.	Naturalism was fascinated by the decay, realism was not.
Both want to create a version of reality.	Naturalism focused on the lower middle classes.
Both a direct response to the literature/drama which had come before (melodrama).	Realism is not interested in the past.

3) He used symbolism, staged plays all in verse and was working on a production of biomechanics and the system.

Extended research activities 6**Activity One**

Look for analysis which covers detail and realistic props, setting and costume. The proximity of the characters, the engagement with each other, the use of the fourth wall or Stanislavski's system or of realism.

Activity Two**Clip one**

Subtext: Benedict – trying to show sympathy and care for Beatrice, because he knows she is in pain, but (until he blurts it out) he cannot show this. When he says he loves her he is trying to show rejection or looking stupid and then tries to save face and make himself look less stupid. He wishes that she had someone who would love and care for her and help her out in the end. Benedict says he loves her, she is shocked, worried that he is lying and also trying to show how strange.

Clip two

Subtext: Edmund – the younger brother is trying to hide his drinking suggesting he is ashamed and others will disapprove. The subtext of 'That's what drove me to drink' is that his drinking is a result of his decision to cover up. Perhaps suggesting an addiction as well as a guilt about doing it. Edmund seems unrepentant about his decision to cover up. When talking about his illness, Edmund seems worried despite his denial. He is worried about his brother for treating both him and his mother as inferior and incompetent.

Jamie – the older brother enjoys having caught his younger brother and this gives him a sense of power. When they both drink they are 'in it together' setting them up in opposition to their father who is in the bottle shows they are both doing something they shouldn't be doing. The pleasure he gets from his addiction, as does hiding the truth. Jamie speaks to his brother as if he knows better because he is older. He is worried about his mother and is blaming his brother if anything happens to her.

Activity Three

A form of the method which focuses on the internal motives, motivations and responses of the character and outward responses; attempting to create an honest and truthful representation of reality.

**COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED**

Answers 7: Stanislavski's Collaboration with Other Practitioners

Consolidation questions 7

- 1) Subtext
- 2) How the students choose to create their timeline may differ, but the key performances should be included:
 - 1896 *The Seagull*
 - 1899 *Uncle Vanya*
 - 1901 *The Three Sisters*
 - 1902 *The Philistines*
 - 1902 *The Lower Depths*
 - 1904 *Uncle Mitya*
 - 1906 *Idiot of the Sun*
 - 1908 *Hamlet*
- 3) Any three from the following:
 - Craig thought *Hamlet* couldn't be performed.
 - Craig wanted symbolic characters.
 - Stanislavski wanted realist characters.
 - Craig wanted *Hamlet* on stage throughout.
 - Craig wanted actors to be ubermarionettes.
 - Stanislavski wanted actors behaving as if they were in their character's position.
 - Stanislavski usually used realist staging.
 - Craig designed a simple set with screens which could be moved symbolically.

Extended research activities 7

Activity One

It will depend which practitioner the student chooses, but look for a brief explanation of how and when they met Stanislavski, followed by an explanation of the work which they should then either be followed by or interspersed with information about the influence of Stanislavski's work.

Activity Two

There are various elements which differ from a realist set design. Some of the answers are:

- Lack of detail
- Use of screens to create a sense of depth
- Simple, dark screens
- Simple, symbolic costume
- Use of cloth to give a sense of furniture

Other answers, clearly explained and justified, may also be appropriate.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED



Answers 8: Stanislavski's Influence on Other Practitioners

Consolidation questions 8

- 1) 1906 and 1922; the tours were welcomed because Russian art was revered in Europe.
- 2) *My Life in Art* – he had wanted to write books about his system, but the publisher which he wrote reluctantly.

3)

Name	Did s/he meet Stanislavski?	Which elements of the system did they develop?
Lee Strasberg	No	Method acting was developed from the focus on emotional memory that Stanislavski brought on that 1920s tour. Method acting, that it focuses too heavily encourages actors to 'become' their characters in a potentially dangerous manner.
Stella Adler	Yes	An actor should not merely use memory to create a character.
Sanford Meisner	No	Encouraged actors to consider the emotional response to the text. His technique (the Meisner technique) focuses more on the relationship between individual character and more on the relationship between characters.

- 4) Brecht and Stanislavski – Brecht's approach was new and innovative, whereas Stanislavski's became stagnant. Brecht offered new ideas which were in opposition to the system of Stanislavski. Brecht, some supported Stanislavski.

Extended research activities 8

- 1) Actors who may be chosen:
 Stanislavski: John Gielgud, Peggy Ashcroft and Michael Redgrave
 Brecht: Lawrence Olivier, Joan Littlewood, Peter Hall
 Ensure for whichever actor was chosen, the information sheet contains information about:
 • Key performances
 • Plays written and/or directed by them
 • Theatres they worked in
 • Film credits
 • Any other interesting information related to their career in theatre
- 3) a. Harold Pinter, Cheryl Crawford and Lee Strasberg
 b. New York
 c. 1931–1940
 d. The War; the lure of Hollywood
 e. 1947
 f. Elia Kazan, Cheryl Crawford and Robert Lewis
 g. Lee Strasberg

COPYRIGHT
PROTECTED

