



Saint Benedict
Catholic Voluntary Academy

2026

**BE
PREPARED**

Drama



St Ralph
Sherwin
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

Be prepared
Booklet

‘A’ Level Drama and
Theatre Studies

Contents

- Course content
- Independence in Drama
- Types of Lighting – recap
- Types of Sound – Recap
- Types of Staging –Recap
- Key Vocabulary
- Essential Reading
- Wider Reading & Resources
- Academic writing
- The 'Rapture' Anthology
- Key Skills
- •Example 'A' level question and response

Year 13	Subject Theme	Wider Reading/Independence
Autumn	Deconstructing Texts for Performance: This unit focuses on the Musical Sweeney Todd and students explore each section of the play practically as a director and an actor. Students must have a vision/ concept for how they would stage a production of the Musical for a contemporary audience	Read play Sweeney Todd Research into Melodrama/ Gothic horror/ living conditions in Victorian England Research into various productions of Sweeney Todd Write up notes both in script and in a log book documenting the staging and semiotic ideas explored in each lesson
Spring	Students will work on a scripted unit of work which they will perform to an external examiner Students will need to complete a written concept pro forma to accompany their practical work, justifying their ideas for their production <i>Looking at exam writing technique for Sweeney Todd</i> <i>Look at Evaluating a live piece of Theatre/ social cultural context</i>	<i>Students are expected to use independence time to rehearse pieces and develop ideas for plot/ lighting sound</i> <i>Research into the chosen playwright, their style, background</i> <i>Watch other productions of the play to develop their directorial visions</i> <i>Write a written concept</i> <i>Practice essays for Live Theatre</i>
Summer	Revisit key scenes from Frankenstein and Othello <i>Look at Evaluating a live piece of Theatre/ social cultural context</i> <i>Looking at exam writing technique for set texts</i>	COMPLETE PRACTICE ESSAYS Complete Annotated script exercises

Year 12	Subject Theme	Wider Reading/Independence
Autumn	Exploring drama practitioners : Antonin Artaud , Constantin Stanislavski, Frantic Assembly Learning how to apply these practitioners ideas and styles to a set text. Students complete a research report which documents their exploration both practical and analytical into the practitioner.	www.franticassembly.co.uk Www.complicite.org The curious incident of the dog in the night time (PLAY) <i>Students are expected to use independence time to rehearse pieces and develop ideas for plot/ lighting sound</i>
Spring	Devising Drama. Drawing direct influence from the practical pieces and work done on practitioners, students create a devised piece of drama. The piece will be approx. 30mins in length. Students also complete a written report on how they devised the piece, on the effectiveness of rehearsals, the impact on the audience in the final performance and any changes they could have made to improve	Students need to keep a working note book documenting how the devised piece evolves. These notes are vital in creating a well structured and detailed essay. Students will also have to research into the topic of their devised piece. This varies each year and is dependent on what the students choose to base their piece on. <i>Students are expected to use independence time to rehearse pieces and develop ideas for plot/ lighting sound</i>
Summer	Begin exploring the two set texts: Frankenstein Othello	Read National Theatre/ Nick Dear Frankenstein Read Othello – Shakespeare Explore these websites to support www.rsc.org.uk www.what's on stage.com

What independent learning looks

like in *Drama...*

- **Read theatre reviews** in quality newspapers (or their online versions), highlighting phrases and expressions that really convey what it was like to watch a particular play.
- **Explore the National Theatre website** which has links to current and past plays. Look out for National Theatre productions which are shown at local cinemas.
- **Visit the theatre in your own time.** Arrange a trip to either amateur or professional productions. Put your name down for their mailing list so that you can keep up to date with shows, events and play readings. Many theatres offer discounts to young people.
- **Find clips of past productions of plays you are studying on YouTube.** Compare different interpretations of the same scene / character / play.
- Do some **background reading to broaden your knowledge about Drama and Theatre.** The School Library stocks a wide range of plays, texts exploring theories and the Stage newspaper which will help to keep you up to date with recent developments. We also have a departmental library; see your teacher if you would like to borrow a book.

RESEARCH into the following Genres/ themes which link with the plays you will be exploring

Historical/ Social

- **Surrealism** – When did the movement happen? How did it change certain people's views on the world?
- **The industrial Revolution** – what it was and how it impacted people's lives – **Links to Frankenstein**
- **The age of Enlightenment** – What it was and how it impacted society's way of thinking – **Links to Frankenstein**

GENRE

- **Gothic** – What are the key features of the genre?

RECAP TYPES OF LIGHTING



PAR CAN – The most basic light. You could put a gel in it and change the colours of different parts of the stage



PROFILE – Use this to have a spotlight on someone, could use this to light a character saying a monologue who doesn't move about too much.



FRESNEL LIGHT – This lights a wide area on the stage known as a **GENERAL WASH**, a general wash makes the stage light and bright. On the sides you have flaps known as barn doors, you can close different sections of the doors to help focus the light on one area of the stage.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO LIGHT THE STAGE

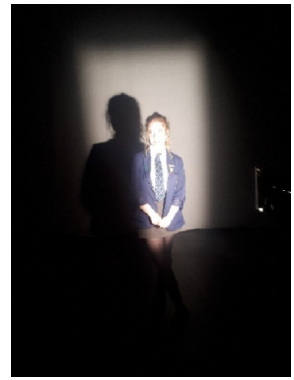
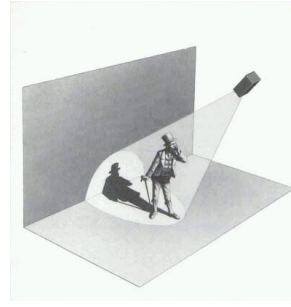
Using coloured gels:

- Using coloured gels can help create an atmosphere for example a blue gel can create the feeling of mourning, but also of night time .
- You can have a **COLD WASH** on stage (which means the whole stage is lit with a blue colour) by adding a blue gel to a **Fresnel lamp**
- You could have a **WARM WASH** on stage (which means the whole stage is lit with a orange/ yellow colour) by adding orange/ yellow to a **Fresnel lamp**.

KEYWORD: TRUSS – The bar that you hang the lights from

WHERE YOU POSITION THE LIGHTS AND HOW THIS HAS DIFFERENT EFFECTS

Front lighting : To light faces/ body



Side lighting : Distorts the face – good to create a threatening feel/ menacing –



Up lighting : Can create shadows this is when you position the light on the floor and light the actors from the floor rather than the ceiling/ truss.



Back lighting: Gives a silhouette of a character, can be used as a way to indicate danger, be more threatening as you can't make out the faces.



Follow spot: This is a **PROFILE LIGHT** on a stand that can move around. It is used to follow someone onstage e.g in a song.

CYCLORAMA : A cyclorama is a plain cloth extending around and above the stage to give a feeling of infinite space. (What we have in the back of the theatre). You can use it in lots of different ways: You can project onto it, create a shadow on it through using front lighting, change the colour of it to create atmosphere or a sense of location.



STROBE: When you flash the lights really quickly. Good to use for a panick scene or when someone's in danger

BLACKOUT: Where all of the lights onstage go out. It can happen quickly (an instant blackout, or gradually – a gradual blackout depending on what impact you want)

RECAP ON SOUND

PANNING : This is when sound can be played from speakers at different sides of the stage at different volume levels. This could create a feeling of being surrounded or if you wanted a sound coming from a particular direction like inside a house you could use this.

FADE IN/ OUT : Use this to create a sense of realism and it being believable, for example you would fade in a noise of a car coming in to give the impression someone has arrived. If someone was walking offstage with a crying baby you would fade out the noise as though they have left... the baby wouldn't stop crying straight away! It wouldn't be realistic!

DELAY EFFECT: An echo to show they are in a large open space or somewhere like a cave....

DISTORT THE MIC: to make it sound loud and gruff

PITCH SHIFT- Change the pitch of someone's voice: change the pitch to lower to make him or her sound older, higher to make him or her sound younger like a child.

PRE RECORDED SOUNDS: Gunshots, clanking of prison doors in prison scene, heartbeat effect

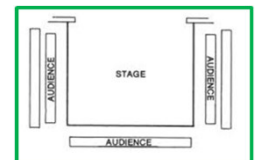
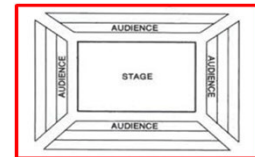
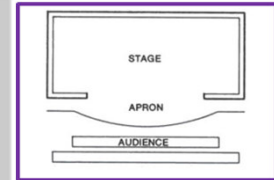
ATMOSPHERIC NOISE: Sound effects that play continuously to create a sense of place.. You could have birds tweeting and cow's mooing to convey the countryside

UNDERSCORING: When music plays underneath characters when they are talking. This helps add atmosphere. It also helps characters move from one scene to another without an awkward pause that stops the flow of the piece

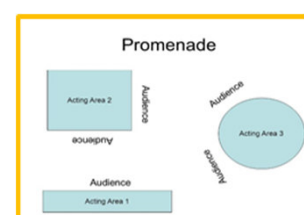
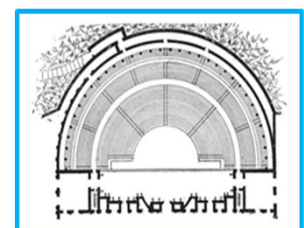
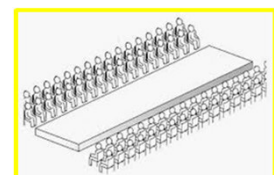
MOTIF: • Sound can act as a motif (a motif is an idea that is repeated throughout the play) for example a ticking clock noise could be played at key moments as a reminder that time is running out –

REMEMBER THE ABSENCE OF SOUND IS SOMETIMES AS POWERFUL!!

Keywords	Definition
Proscenium Arch	The original staging for Blood Brothers. The audience sits in front of the stage. The audience views the stage as though they were peering through a picture frame or an invisible '4 th wall'
Theatre in the Round	A style of performance where the acting space has audience all the way around it in a circle shape. Often a <u>number of</u> entrances. Directors <u>have to</u> think carefully about use of furniture and scenery as audience sightlines can easily be blocked
Thrust	<u>Rectangular in shape.</u> The audience directly faces the stage from all three sides

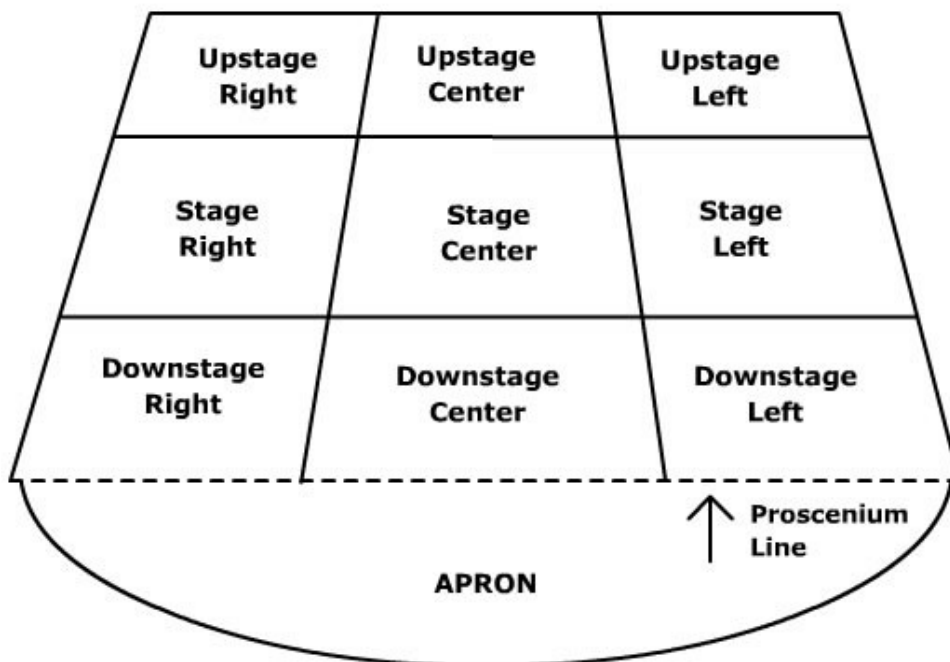


Keywords	Definition
Traverse	The acting areas is down the middle of the space. The audience sit facing the acting area from two sides
Amphitheatre	Also known as 'arena'. Large outdoor performance space. Audience in <u>semi circle</u> with tiered staging. Ancient Greek form of staging
Promenade	There is no formal stage. The actors and audience are put in the same space. The performance starts when an actor draws attention to himself. During the performance an actor will stimulate the audience to move around to different locations



Keywords	
Cue	A trigger for an action to be carried out. A line to be said, a person to enter a light to come on etc.
Blackout	The act of turning off the stage lights
Practitioner	An influential person. A person who creates theories to go with drama
Abstract	Doesn't follow a linear story. More concerned with focusing on the emotions or mood or themes in a piece
Naturalistic	Where you try to create an illusion of reality onstage.
Ensemble	A group of actors who work fluidly together

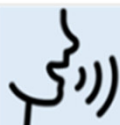
AREAS OF A STAGE



KEY VOCABULARY

Keywords	VOICE 
Tone	The emotion in your voice
Pitch	How high/low your voice is
Pace	How fast/ slow your voice is
Pause	When you stop moving/ speaking
Volume	How loud/ quiet your voice is
Projection	When you speak clearly and can be heard by an audience

Keywords	MOVEMENT 
Posture	How you hold your body/your stance
Gestures	How you move any part of your body to show a mood, feeling or idea
Facial expressions	Using your face to show emotions, mood, feelings and responses
Eye contact	When you establish eye contact with another actor or the audience

 Eyes – wide / squinted / wink ... Mouth – smile / frown / pressed together / curled lip ... Face – frow furrowed / cheeks tense / chin pushed into neck ...	 Line – quote what the actor said Tone – attitude / emotion ... Vocal qualities – volume / speed / pause / emphasis ...	 Feet – apart / together / one in front of the other / weight on the left ... Spine – straight / tense and pulled up / hunched / leaning forward ... Head – on one side / straight up / hunched into neck ...
 What – thumbs up / wave / indicate / point to ... To who / what – towards the audience / to actor x / towards the table ... Qualities – attitude / emotion / speed / tension ...	 What – stamping / striding / crawling / jumping ... Where – towards the audience or the table or actor x / UD, DS / from SL to SR ... Qualities – attitude / emotion / speed / tension ...	 What – speaking / arm around / fist bangs on ... To who / what – to the audience / to actor x / on the table ... Qualities – attitude / emotion / speed / tension ...

Essential Reading

- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time – Simon Stephens
- Frankenstein : National Theatre – Nick Dear
- Othello – William Shakespeare
- Sweeney Todd – Stephen Sondheim

Wider Reading & Resources

- Research and watch YouTube clips of the following contemporary theatre companies;
- Kneehigh,
- Frantic Assembly
- Complicite.

- Useful Websites for you to use.....
- www.franticassembly.co.uk
- <http://theatredatabase.com>
- <http://www.complicite.org>
- <http://www.fashionmuseum.co.uk>
- <http://www.rsc.org.uk>
- www.itheatrestudies.com
- www.nationaltheatre.org.uk
- www.stagework.org.uk
- www.theatrevoice.com
- www.whatsonstage.com
- www.britishtheatreguide.info/
- www.theatrerecord.com
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Academic Writing

Expressing your ideas with clarity and detail are important. Use the following sentence stems to help you structure your ideas.

To introduce

This essay discusses ...	... is explored ...	... is defined ...
The definition of ... will be given	... is briefly outlined ...	... is explored ...
The issue focused on	... is demonstrated ...	... is included ...
In this essay	... is explained ...	... are identified ...
The key aspect discussed ...	... are presented ...	... is justified ...
Views on range from	... is evaluated ...	... is examined ...
The central theme ...	... is described ...	... is analysed ...
Emphasised are ...	... is explained and illustrated with examples ...	

To conclude

In summary, ...	To review, ...	In conclusion, ...
In brief, ...	To summarise, ...	To sum up, ...
To conclude, ...	Thus, ...	Hence, ...
It has been shown that, ...	In short, ...	

To give examples

For example, ...	... as can be seen in ...	... supports ...
For instance, ...	... as demonstrated by ...	... is observed ...
Specifically, ...	... is shown ...	... exemplifies ...
Such as ...	As an example ...	To illustrate, ...

To add ideas

Also, ...	Equally important ...	Subsequently, ...
Futhermore, ...	Moreover, ...	As well as
Next...	Another essential point...	Additionally, ...
More importantly, ...	In the same way ...	Another ...
Then, ...	In addition, ...	Besides, ...
Then again, ...	Firstly, ... secondly, ... thirdly, ... finally, ...	To elaborate, ...

To present prior or background ideas

In the past, ...	Historically, ...	Traditionally, ...
Customarily, ...	Beforehand, ...	Originally, ...
Prior to this, ...	Earlier, ...	Formerly, ...
Previously, ...	Over time, ...	At the time of ...
Conventionally, ...	Foundational to this is ...	In earlier ...
Initially, ...	At first, ...	Recently ...
Until now, ...	The traditional interpretation ...	

To present others' ideas

According to ...	Based on the findings of ... it can be argued...	... proposed that ...
As explained by ...	... states that ...	... claims that ...
However, ... stated that ...	... suggested ...	... concluded that ...
Similarly, ... stated that ...	... for example, ...	... agreed that ...
Based on the ideas of ...	... defined ... as ...	... relates ...
As identified by ...	... disputed that ...	... contrasts ...
With regard to ... argued that ...	... concluded that ...	... confirmed that ...
... argues ...	... highlights ...	... demonstrates ...
... found that ...	... identifies ...	... wrote that ...
... demonstrated ...	... also ...	... reported ...
... pointed out that ...	... maintained that ...	... hypothesised that ...
... expressed the opinion that ...	... also mentioned ...	... asserts that ...
... identified ...	... goes on to state/suggest/say	... emphasises
... challenges the idea ...	... showed that ...	... explored the idea ...

To keep the 'I' out of academic writing

It can be argued...	Arguably...	It may be that...
This assignment will present the following point of view...	Some theorists, notably Bloggs (1990) and Jones (1992) have argued...	There are two sides to this question. Firstly ...
Another point of view suggests however, that ...	This assignment will attempt to show that...	In conclusion it can be argued that...
It can be seen that...	One point of view is that ...	However ...

Understanding the question

- **Decipher the Prompt:** Read the question carefully, ensuring you understand what it requires.
- Identify keywords and directives (e.g., explore, analyse, discuss) to guide your response.

Essay structure – Live Theatre Review

Introduction: Begin with a compelling introduction. Provide background information and

Body Paragraphs: Each paragraph should focus on a specific point or argument . Begin with a topic sentence, provide evidence, and then analyse and refer to the impact on the audience

Transitioning: Ensure smooth transitions between paragraphs and sections. Use linking words and phrases to connect ideas and maintain the essay's coherence.

Conclusion: Recap your overall feelings without introducing new information – refer back to the key words of the question

How to structure your Live Theatre question

Focus : Frankenstein : National Theatre

Context	Provided context of the moment, what is happening, where, when? Etc Make this brief, you are not retelling the narrative.	
Example	Detailed performance/design example, referencing the use of a range of skills etc This is where you need to make sure you have lots of terminology	
Analysis	This is the 'why' To show... to communicate... to suggest.... Relating to the character, plot, relationship or focus of the question	
Evaluation	I thought that this was successful because... It is your opinion. There is not right or wrong but you have to justify your opinion.	
Link	Back to the focus of the question.	

APPROACHING A LIVE THEATRE QUESTION

Evaluate how successfully performance skills were used in communicating meaning to you in the live performance you have seen.

In your answer, you should consider:

- *how the actor/s created and communicated meaning*
- *what skills the actor/s used in the characterisation*
- *how the actor effectively used props and/or stage design*
- *You should use appropriate drama and theatre terminology.*

Context	Provided context of the moment, what is happening, where, when? Etc Make this brief, you are not retelling the narrative.	In the scene where The Creature meets De Lacey we feel a sense of empathy towards him
Example	Detailed performance/design example, referencing the use of a range of skills etc This is where you need to make sure you have lots of terminology	I n the moment that De Lacey (Morgan) pushed the food towards The Creature, Cumberbatch jolted backwards very quickly to increase the proxemics between the two characters. He raises his arms in front of his face in a defensive gesture and his body language is closed to show that he is cowering.
Analysis	This is the 'why' To show... to communicate... to suggest.... Relating to the character, plot, relationship or focus of the question	This instantly communicated that The Creature is scared of other humans and reveals the torture that he has received from the people he has met since his "birth". This moment made me feel huge empathy for the character and sad at his cruel and unfair treatment.
Evaluation	I thought that this was successful because... It is your opinion. There is not right or wrong but you have to justify your opinion.	I thought Cumberbatch was very successful in this moment and he really raised the tension in the audience as we feared he would attack De Lacey.
Link	Back to the focus of the question.	

Point: What did they do?

Evidence: How did they do it, lots and lots of detail. You are writing as if your examiner hasn't seen it!

Explain: What was the effect on you and on the audience. Try and have a personal response, how did it make you feel, what did it show you.

Link: Link your point back to the overall question

Terminology: Make sure you have used lots and lots of terminology

Introduction: Remember the first part can stay the same, you will just need to change the end sentence or two to link back to the question.

On the 5th November, this year, As a class we watched.....; directed by Danny Boyle. The play is about leaving the Creature to wonder through the streets of Ingolstadt. The adaptation surrounds the themes of.....

I felt that..... used their physical and To show that.....

The impact this had on me as an audience member was.....

Key moment 1: You are speaking about 1 key moment in relation to the question. Remember you must embed terminology throughout.

The first key moment when Is highlighted is the scene.

Benedict Cumberbatch used.....

(This is when you use lots of detail to say what is physically/vocally/design happening on stage)

To show... to communicate... to suggest....

I thought that this was successful because.....

Therefore.... (link back to the Q)

Key moment 2: You are speaking about 1 key moment in relation to the question. Remember you must embed terminology throughout.

A second key moment when Is highlighted is the scene.

Benedict Cumberbatch used.....

(This is when you use lots of detail to say what is physically/vocally/design happening on stage)

To show... to communicate... to suggest....

I thought that this was successful because.....

Therefore.... (link back to the Q)

Key moment 3: You are speaking about 1 key moment in relation to the question. Remember you must embed terminology throughout.

Another key moment when Is highlighted is the scene.

Benedict Cumberbatch used.....

(This is when you use lots of detail to say what is physically/vocally/design happening on stage)

To show... to communicate... to suggest....

I thought that this was successful because.....

Therefore.... (link back to the Q)

Terminology to include:

Body language

Posture

Eye contact

 Gesture

Gait

Stance

Proxemics

Pitch

Pace

Tone

Intonation

Projection

Pause

Emphasis

Conclusion

Overall, I believe that the showing the effects of by the director, Danny Boyle, the designers, and the actors, was extremely successful to me as an audience member because.....

It is because of this I felt that.....

Evaluate how successfully performance skills were used in communicating meaning to you in the live performance you have seen.

INTRODUCTION – LINKING TO THE QUESTION

- On the 8TH of September, as a class we watched The National Theatre's adaptation of Frankenstein 2011 via National Theatre Digital; directed by Danny Boyle. The play is about how Victor Frankenstein played by Jonny Lee Miller, creates a creature from human corpses. Victor becomes appalled by his creation when the creature is brought to life and runs away; leaving the Creature to wander through the streets of Ingolstadt. The adaptation surrounds the themes of childhood, abandonment, loneliness and solitude.
- I felt that Benedict Cumberbatch who played The Creature created an interesting and vividly engaging performance with his use of physicality and vocal skills. This in turn made me, as part of the audience, feel suspense, fear and horror, which are all apt moods and atmospheres of a traditional tragedy.
- Benedict Cumberbatch cleverly achieved the portrayal of The Creature by using bold and restricted movements alongside a variety of vocal apparitions and grunts to cleverly create a 'monster' like character.

Point: What did they do?

Evidence: How did they do it, lots and lots of detail. You are writing as if your examiner hasn't seen it!

Explain: What was the effect on you and on the audience. Try and have a personal response, how did it make you feel, what did it show you.

Link: Link your point back to the overall question

Terminology: Make sure you have used lots and lots of terminology

Evaluate the impact that the characterisation of ONE actor from the live production had on you as an audience member.

Terminology to include;

Body language

Posture

Eye contact

Gait

Stance

Proxemics

Pitch

Pace

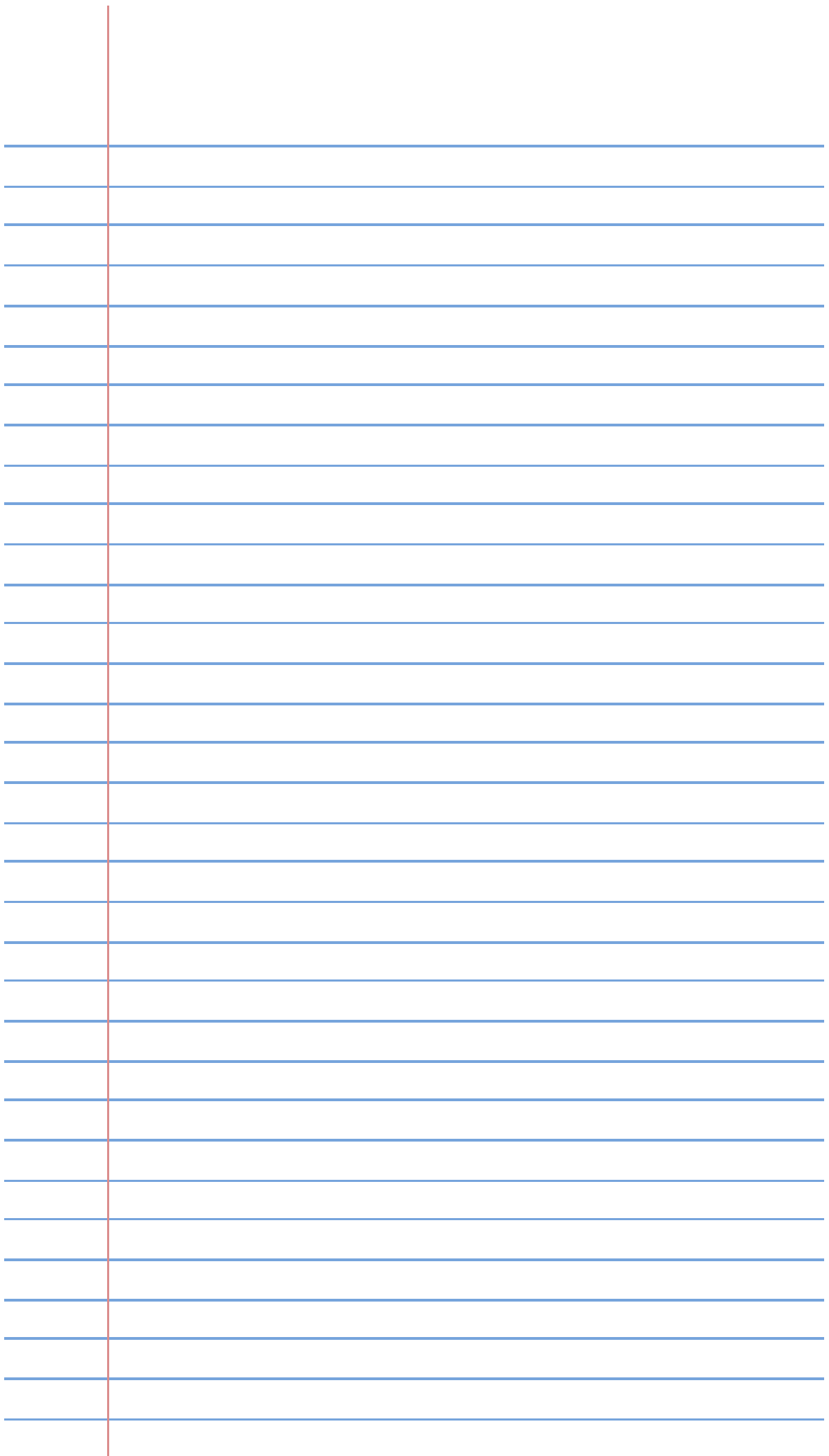
Tone

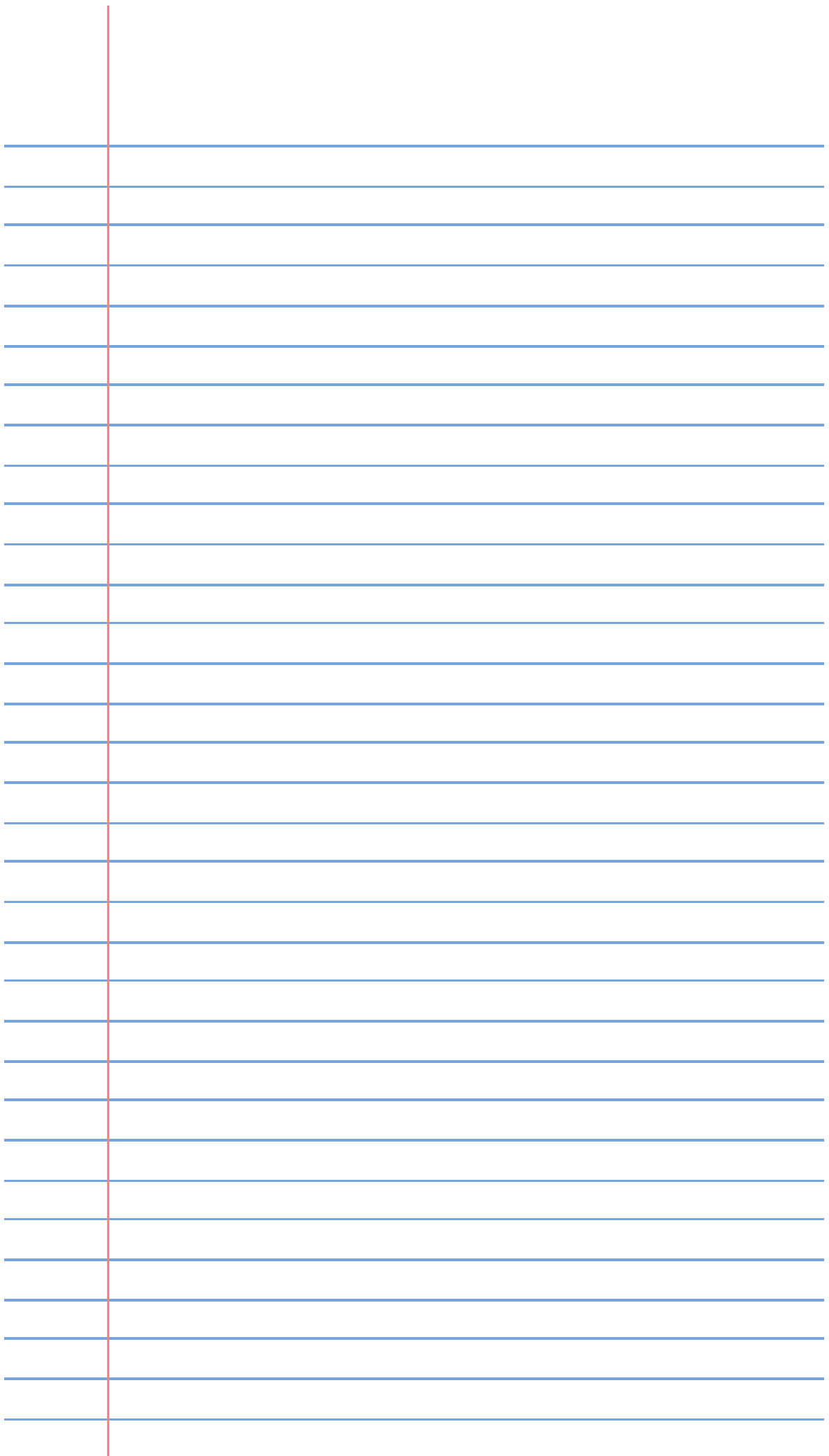
Intonation

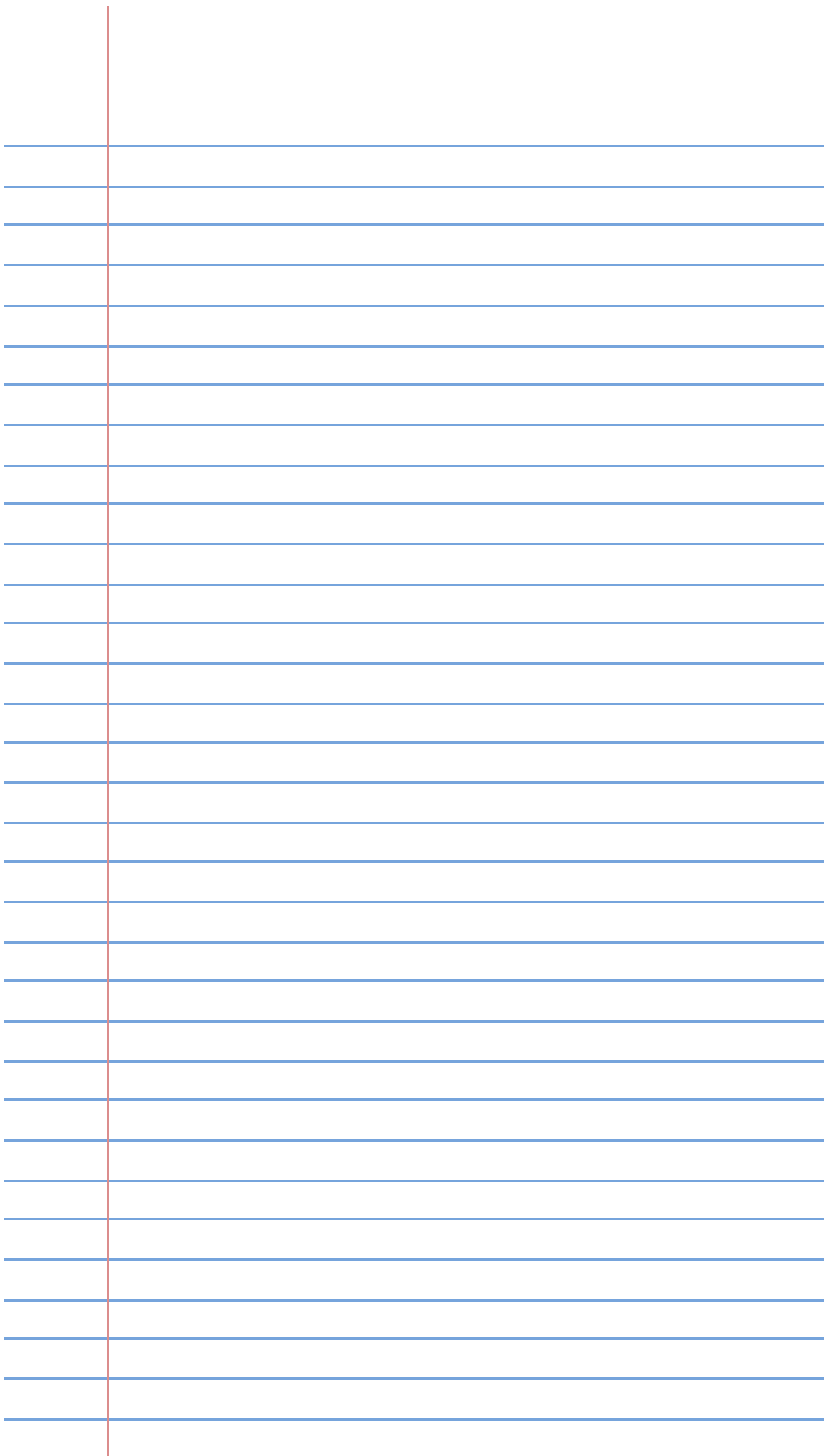
Projection

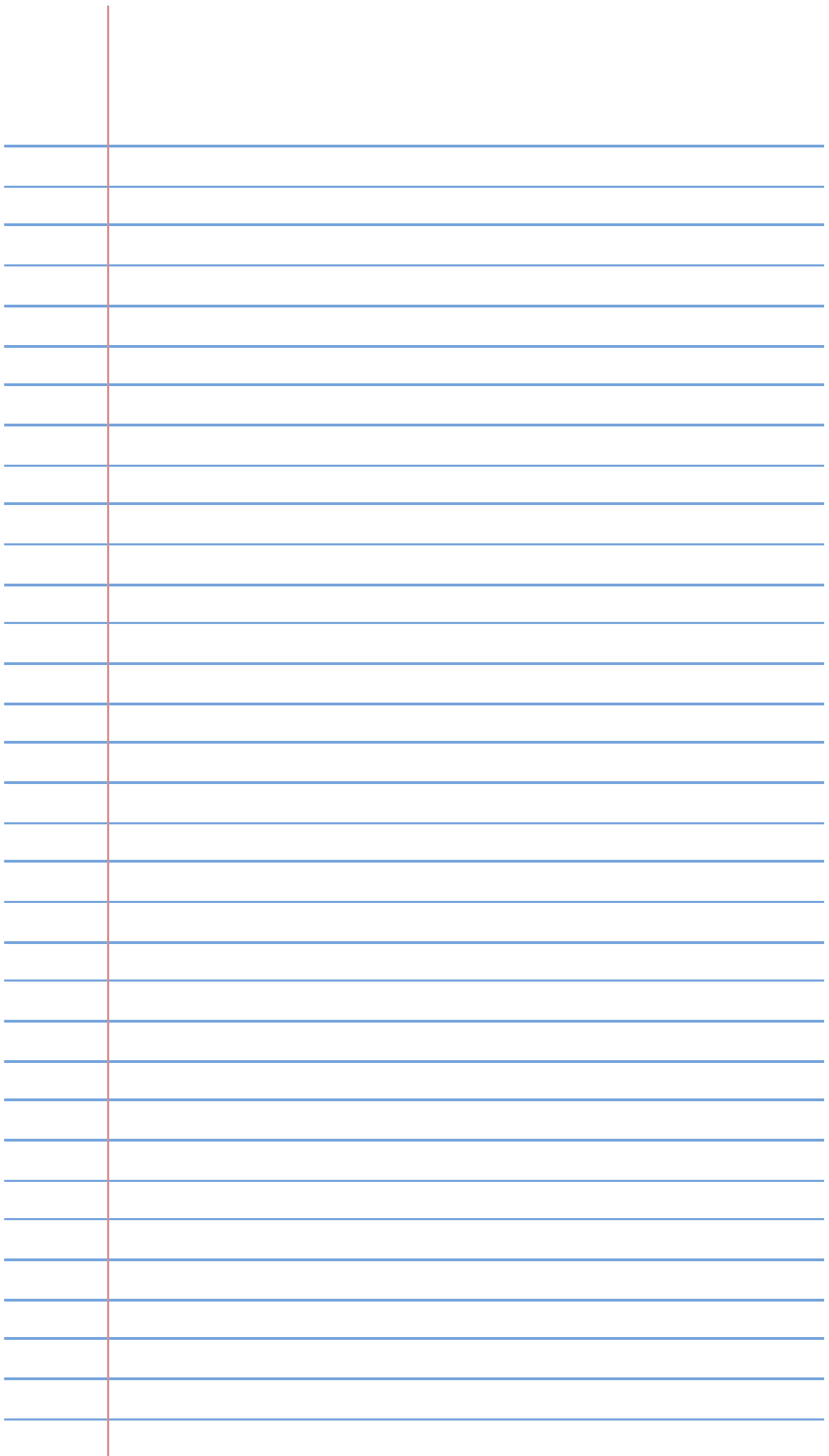
Highlight - Go back through your writing. Have you included everything?

What did you forget – What would you want to improve?









EXAMPLES OF LIVE THEATRE QUESTIONS FROM PAST PAPERS

4

Section B

All candidates are required to answer the question in Section B.

- 7* Analyse how successfully the director communicated the message of the play in the live performance you have seen.

At the start of your answer state the name, venue and date (month and year) of the live performance you have seen. [30]

Section B

All candidates are required to answer the question in Section B.

- 7* Evaluate a live performance, considering the use of theatrical conventions in the director's interpretation of the performance text.

At the start of your answer state the name, venue and date (month and year) of the live performance you have seen. [30]

- 7* Analyse a live performance you have seen, outlining the director's interpretation and how effective you think it was.

At the start of your answer state the name, venue and date (month and year) of the live performance you have seen.

[30]