

Grade 6 Theory

- a. Be able to discuss the meaning and mood of the poem with the examiner.
- b. Be able to define and demonstrate pitch and vocal projection.
- c. Be able to discuss with the examiner the technique you used for your sight reading.

Meaning and Mood of the Poem: The examiner will need to know that the candidate understands what his/her poem is about and how that might be discerned from the poet's words. In studying the poem, it is useful to know something about the poet, his/her life and other work.

Pitch refers to where one's voice falls on the musical scale. We all have a natural pitch, the note of which depends principally on the length and thickness of our vocal chords. (To find your middle pitch you can say a sustained 'ahhh' in your natural conversational tone and try to find the corresponding note on a piano.)

Pitch tends to be categorised as middle, high and low.

- Middle is used for general conversation, prose and verse speaking.
- High to convey excitement, some anger, emotional stress, terror and so on.
- Low for deep anger, sorrow, despair or conspiracy.

Vocal Projection means the way you use your voice in order to be heard clearly from any part of the theatre or auditorium in which you are speaking or acting. A properly projected voice should appear clear and bright at the back of the theatre.

Projection involves the use of both mental and physical processes.

Mentally you need to be aware of your audience - you are speaking to all of them. Direct your speech particularly to the person furthest away from you. Mentally project your voice UP and OUT.

Physically, projection is achieved through a combination of proper breathing, appropriate posture or stance and the use of forward tone - where the voice is not stuck in your throat but is allowed to resonate in the various cavities in your neck and head.

Projection is never achieved through shouting. Rather, projection is about ensuring that the words that you speak can be heard clearly.

Sight Reading

Use the time given for preparation to glance over the text before starting. Try to take in the overall mood and content. Pay particular attention to the opening and closing paragraphs. Are there any difficult words or dialogue?

When you're ready to start, adopt a balanced posture/stance. Hold the book/ page so that it doesn't hide your face.

Announce clearly the title of the Book and Author (try to do this directly to the audience, without reading it). Start slowly, and let your eye run ahead of your voice.

Don't read too quickly.

Try to reflect the mood(s) of the text in your voice, vary your pace and don't forget to use the pause. Try to use characterisation in your voice for any dialogue.

Try to make eye contact. However, fluency is more important than eye contact with the audience and darting your eyes up to the audience and straight back to the page is distracting. If you come across a difficult word, attempt it and go on - never stop or apologise - just keep going. Try and keep your voice strong to the final word.

To summarise:

- Glance over the piece
- Announce the title of the Poem and Author. (Do not read it)
- Watch your posture.
- Vary the rate - but, overall, speak slowly.
- Look up and make audience contact - hold the book/page away from your face.
- Tell the story clearly and with vocal and facial expression.
- Be natural and sincere
- Give it your best shot - don't stop

Also when Sight Reading a Poem, try to let it flow and tell the story of the poem to your audience. Watch out for the suspensive pause or enjambment, that is, when the sense of one line is carried, without a break, but with a slight upward inflection to the next line.

- Pause between the Verses or Stanzas.
- Never put emphasis on a conjunctive or unimportant word.
- Try to paint word-pictures.
- Make audience contact and speak at a suitable pace.

Further notes on clear speaking:

Any performance will be enhanced by Crisp Diction, Projection, Fluency, Sincerity, Correct Pronunciation and Breath Control. We must speak clearly so that we can be heard and understood.

Diction: Do Lip and Tongue exercises daily.

Fluency is to verbalize your thoughts without hesitation.

Sincerity - To mean what you say. It is important to be natural and sincere, as well as having technique and artistry.

Breath Control: Breath is the motive power of speech. If breath is weak - the sound will be weak. Do Breathing exercises daily, e.g. stretch to the ceiling and yawn. You will feel the Diaphragm rising.