

## Year 10 Set Design Worksheet

### Task 1 (5-10 mins)

- ★ Revise the key features and uses of **set** by reading through the Knowledge Organiser at the bottom of page 3.

### Task 2 (10 - 15 mins)

Watch the **Stage Design** short film by National Theatre on YouTube:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=Tv\\_geitX9\\_4&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=Tv_geitX9_4&feature=emb_logo)

Answer these questions based on the YouTube clip:

Question:	Answer:
Why is it important to consider everything that is put on stage and seen by the audience?	
What does Bunny Christie (Designer for the National Theatre, UK) suggest you write down about each scene before you start designing?	
What does Bunny Christie do for research when starting a new design?	
What is the difference between drawn stage designs and model sets?	

### Task 3 (15 mins)

Watch the two clips below:

- ★ Clip 1: Design Challenge – designing and making a set (3 mins 35 sec) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLw-QapkxnA>
- ★ Clip 2: 'Wicked' Behind the Scenes: Creativity in Set Design (12 mins 16 sec) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DHcON8JKhY>

#### Task 4: Set Design in 'An Inspector Calls' (10-15 mins)

At first glance, this play seems to require a straightforward box set on a Proscenium arch stage, as most of the action is set in the dining room of the Birlings' house, like this:



The production directed by Stephen Daldry helped to change that perception, using the set and staging to communicate themes visually to the audience and even making them part of the performance itself.

a) Watch the trailer for Stephen Daldry's production (1 min 40sec)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7jGR61PM6k>

b) Now watch the trailer *again*, pausing it whenever you see a feature of the set design. You are looking for any of the following (see slide 2):

- ❖ Drapery
- ❖ Levels
- ❖ Projections
- ❖ Flats
- ❖ Scenic devices

Use the Knowledge Organiser to remind you of what these terms mean!

c) Make a note of what features are used; how they are used and why they are used. Find 2 striking examples:

E.g. 1

E.g. 2

## Task 5: write ONE 'what → how → why' evaluation of how SET has been used in Stephen Daldry's productions of 'An Inspector Calls'

WHAT

HOW

WHY

**WHAT:**

- ❖ Drapery
- ❖ Levels
- ❖ Projections
- ❖ Flats
- ❖ Scenic

**HOW:**

- ❖ Colour
- ❖ Condition
- ❖ Practicalities
- ❖ Scale

**WHY:**

- ❖ To create a sense of place
- ❖ To create a sense of time (or to distort it?)
- ❖ To create the world of the play
- ❖ To add symbolism

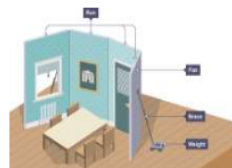
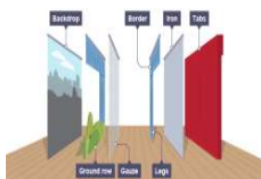
**Scenic devices:**

Set designers use a range of scenic devices to convey their design ideas.

**1. Drapery**

There are different types of curtains that are used for different purposes:

- **Backdrops** (also called a **backcloth**) - a piece of cloth hung behind the stage in a theatre as part of the scenery that can be painted or have coloured light or projections shone onto it
- **Borders** - wide and short drapes that mask the top of the stage where lights are hung
- **Gauze** (also called a **scrim**) - a thin curtain that can be lit either from the front to make it opaque, or from behind to make it transparent
- **Legs** - long and narrow drapes used to mask the wing space
- **Tab**s - the name for stage curtains that can open horizontally or fly vertically
- **Ground row** - a long, low piece of stage scenery, built to simulate part of a landscape. It is sometimes used to conceal lanterns from the audience
- **Iron** - a safety curtain designed to prevent stage fires spreading into the auditorium.



**2. Levels**

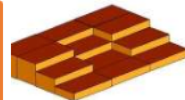
A set designer can vary levels through the use of **rostra**, ramps and steps. Ordinary blocks, staging units, scaffolding and planks can be used to create levels and can be joined together to create steps or other shapes. Levels are often used in productions to portray a character's status, power or situation.

**3. Projections**

Projections are becoming more common within set design and can be used to add detail and texture on stage. In some venues scenery can be projected, which can be very effective but can have limitations. For example, unless it can be projected from behind the set, actors will cast shadows onto it.

**4. Flats**

A **flat** is a piece of scenery used to represent a wall or to conceal a backstage area. A series of flats can be joined together to make a **run**.



**There are several other scenic devices that can be incorporated into a set design:**

- **Set dressing** - smaller items that add details to a set, such as **stage furniture**, to help establish setting and era
- **Entrances and exits** - a set designer might include **naturalistic** doors or performers may enter from the wing space or even enter or exit from **trap doors**
- **Floors** - sets usually incorporate a floor that is fixed to the stage
- **Pyrotechnics (pyro)** - the use of fireworks within theatre to create effects, eg explosions
- **Hydraulics** - machinery used in large-scale productions to move set, usually up and down
- **Smoke** - used to create dramatic effects and created with a **fogger** or a **hazer**
- **Truck** - a moving platform on which a piece of scenery is built to facilitate scene changing
- **Revolve** - a turntable built into the stage floor on which scenery can be set and then turned
- **Flying** - involves a manual or electric system that lifts performers off the stage, allowing for stunts and aerial sequences

### Conveying setting:

The most essential aspect of set design is to show the audience where the action takes place, which might be as general as a country or as specific as a room within a house.

### Communicating themes or symbols:

- The set design can also communicate abstract concepts, such as **themes** and **symbols**. As an example, a design could include a large, dead tree to suggest the themes of death and decay.



### Considerations when designing a set:

When designing a set, there are several aspects to consider, including:

- colour
- condition
- practicalities
- scale

#### Colour

Colour can be used within set design to symbolise various ideas on stage. For example, a set designer might make a Victorian schoolhouse look stricter by using dull greys and a monochromatic palette.

#### Condition

The condition of a design can reveal important information about the setting or a character's circumstances. For example, a living room with tatty, ripped curtains and stained carpets might suggest that the house is old or that the character who lives there is poor.

#### Practicalities

A set designer will need to consider the practical aspects of set design. If the play has lots of fast-paced scenes in various locations, set design may need to be kept minimal to help with the quick changes.

#### Scale

A set designer can experiment with scale to create different effects on stage. Forced perspective is a design technique used to make an object appear either further away or closer than it is in reality. For example, a scene set on a street could feature a row of houses on both sides of the stage, and those further from the audience can be smaller to create an optical illusion, making the road appear longer.

