

Group Rhetorical Analysis – Hamlet Film Scene Study

As we tried our hand at a kind of rhetorical analysis last semester (looking at rap lyrics), let's change focus and look at film scenes from a rhetorical perspective.

Some reminders:

- 1) Rhetoric has many definitions, but broadly it is the use of language to convey meaning.
- 2) Rather than focusing on just the content of the text or plot events that happen, keep the writer/director's moves in mind. How did they do whatever you are asserting they did?
- 3) An analysis looks at a work in a concentrated way, beginning with a theory or assumption, zooming in to prove it with detailed evidence and well-drawn conclusions, and zooming out to establish a "big picture" of why it even matters.

Assignment: Reading & watching *Hamlet* closely, find a scene you wish to explore (that occurs across films). Then consider the moves respective directors make to bring the scene to life in various ways. What "moves" do they make? How do they compare?

Use the information provided in class, any notes you take on the film scenes, and additional sources both popular (websites, reviews, video clips) and academic (JSTOR articles), plus the primary source—Shakespeare's *Hamlet*— to build a paper that explores a scene.

Start your research by developing your ideas, proposing a topic, locating suitable sources, creating a design, taking/making notes as needed, then writing a draft. Make this project collaborative by continually discussing your thoughts with your group. Your paper should be a minimum three pages long (no longer than six, please).

Required/Suggested sources for *Hamlet* film study:

- **Hamlet** by William Shakespeare (cite by act, scene, and line)*
- An **academic journal article** from a trusted database like JSTOR. (And it doesn't have to be recent. Shakespeare hasn't changed in 400 years and these films are at the least 23 years ago.)
- **Film clips** of the scene you are analyzing. Many of the most famous can be found as YouTube clips. Currently, the Branagh is available on Amazon Prime, the Zeffirelli on Paramount +, and the Almereyda for purchase on Amazon. (Don't forget you'll timestamp video citations.)
- Also, film reviews online – look for ones that are legit and not just user comments on blogs and such.
- And these two web locations that do a nice job of explaining rhetorical choices and rhetorical appeals in film.
 - <https://writingcommons.org/section/research/research-methods/textual-methods/rhetorical-analysis/rhetorical-analysis-of-film/>
 - <https://filmdaft.com/how-to-use-ethos-logos-and-pathos-in-film-with-examples/>

Citing Shakespeare MLA Style:

* Italicize the titles of plays within text and cite using capital Roman numeral for act, followed by lowercase Roman numeral for scene, and Arabic numerals for line numbers (all within the citation parentheses). Place an individual period after both act and scene. When quoting poetic lines, use a slash to show line break for short passages and for quoting four or more lines, use block text indented appropriately.

Ex: Hamlet's famous soliloquy shows his mental distress.

"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." (III. i. 55-59)

Or

Hamlet shows his penchant for drama when he says, "[t]o be, or not to be, that is the question" (III. i. 55).

And a reminder – in the discipline of English, keep verbs present tense for events happening within a work and regarding the actions or writings of the author. For example, "Shakespeare creates in Ophelia a character that is simultaneously sympathetic and indifferent." (Even though Shakespeare is dead and already did (past tense) this writing, literature lives on, constantly "existing" again and again. "In Act V, Hamlet *stabs* Laertes with Laertes' own sword" (not *stabbed* because it happens anew each time it is read or performed). Same goes for choices made by directors—Branagh, Zeffirelli, & Almereyda.