

Hamlet film

Literature



Film Clip Assignment (March 14) – There will be no regular on that day. You may complete this assignment in the library or at home. You can choose to work with a partner or alone, but each person will turn in their own assignment when class resumes on March 19. View the Hamlet film clips on ANGEL. There are clips from two versions: one starring Mel Gibson as Hamlet (1990) and another starring Ethan Hawke in a modern update (2000). Write your answers on the back or attach another sheet. Part 1: First compare and contrast the Act I “ Frailty, thy name is woman” scenes by both actors. What is similar and what is different about their performances (their movements, the way they deliver the lines, etc)? What emotions do they portray? Which performance was more effective for you? The soliloquy is spoken by Ethan Hawke in a rather resentful tone while watching a video clip of his own mother and his uncle, and as his thoughts race through his brain and as his anger seems to bottle up, he presses the fast forward button. However, Ethan Hawke’s face lacks emotion and his anger can hardly be felt especially because he seems like a good person here. In fact, I could not even exactly hear the words “ Frailty, thy name is woman,” and it seems that either the line was not spoken at all or was modified. On the other hand, Mel Gibson was full of emotion especially rage and resentment, as he watches his mother and uncle mount the horse and leave. Besides, he raised his voice in the end and clearly said, “ Frailty, thy name is woman” in a most forceful whisper. Moreover, the movement of Mel Gibson’s eyes illustrated very well the confusing thoughts that may in fact be going on in his head. Part 2: Next, look at the famous “ To be or not to be” soliloquy from both versions (Act III). Again, compare the performance of the two actors. How do the settings in each reflect the tone of the words in the speech? What was your response to <https://assignbuster.com/hamlet-film/>

the way that each actor chose to portray the character of Hamlet in this key scene? The soliloquy of life and death was portrayed by Ethan Hawke while using active TV monitors, thus resulting in a rather substandard Matrix-like version of Shakespeare's classic. Ethan Hawke's version of the soliloquy is rather unemotional and his voice never rises as he performs this part of the film. It somehow only slows down at the part where he speaks the lines "To die, to sleep/ To sleep: perchance to dream," where he somehow alludes to the idea of dream and reality in the film *The Matrix* (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III. 1, lines 64-65). Overall, however, Ethan Hawke's performance was rather dry and his emotions were not only lacking in intensity but also in vigor. On the other hand, Mel Gibson did a stunning performance of the soliloquy. His eyes, voice and facial expression demonstrate the curious appearance of Hamlet himself. Moreover, he emphasizes some lines as he goes through the soliloquy. He momentarily raises his voice in the lines: "For who would bear the whips and scorns of time/ Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay/ The insolence of office and spurns" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III. 1, lines 70-73). Moreover, he also looks emotional in the lines: "And makes us rather bear those ills we have/ Than fly to others that we know not of?/ Thus conscience does make cowards of us all," he somehow simply announces to the audience in written form the conscienceless man that he is to evolve into as the play progresses, but this is rather spoken very emotionally in the film (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III. 1, lines 81-83). Unlike Ethan Hawke in the film, the character of Mel Gibson actually portrays a certain Hamlet who really knows what he is saying in the context of the entire play.

Part 3: Choose one other clip from any of the acts (either film version) and describe your

response to seeing that scene translated from the page to the screen. Does it meet your expectations after reading the play? How did the director and actor(s) interpret the scene? What stood out to you most about the scene? I choose Act I scene 5, where Hamlet encounters his father's ghost. In the Ethan Hawke version, he sees his father just outside his apartment and lets him in, but I wonder why the father seems to act upset when in fact his son owes him nothing. There is also no clear indication that this particular scene was a haunting, and that there was a lot of body contact between them. On the other hand, Mel Gibson's version was perfect for the king was really portrayed as a ghost or as something that disappears after they talk, and also as something that Hamlet can see but his mother cannot, as in the scene where Hamlet stabs Polonius by the curtain. Overall, the presentation in Mel Gibson's version of the film perfectly conforms to the play as it is written, or at least better than how Ethan Hawke's version does. DUE: Tuesday, March 19 in our regular classroom Reminder: On March 19, you also have a short quiz on the drama terms from before Spring Break and a quiz on the short story by Steinbeck (read on ANGEL before class).