

# Which version of the hamlet ghost scene (act 1 scene 5) essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



In this essay I will compare three film versions of the ghost scene from Shakespeare's play, 'Hamlet'. They are; Mel Gibson version made in 1990, Kenneth Branagh's version produced in 1996 and Ethan Hawke's version from 2001. In my opinion the Mel Gibson version has the best interpretation of the ghost scene, because it is more original and believable than the same scene in the other two films. In this essay I will show why I prefer the Mel Gibson version, rather than the Ethan Hawke and Kenneth Branagh versions.

The Mel Gibson film, the earliest of the three, from 1990, is filmed in the north of Denmark, which is where the play is actually set. It is in the medieval castle of Elsinore, which fits the period the play was originally set in. This is very effective as the castle buildings provide a dramatic setting and increases the tension of the film. The ghost scene is set in the castle battlements of Ellsinore and the dark night sky, along with the howling wind builds tension and suspense in the scene.

In my opinion this is very effective because it's very traditional and fits in better with the way that Shakespeare had intended the scene to be perceived. In the Kenneth Branagh film the ghost scene is set in an orchard on the castle grounds, presumably where Hamlet's father was murdered. It is a very detailed setting, there are lots of trees, which add to the atmosphere by making the characters appear enclosed and trapped.

It is also dark and gloomy which creates an intense atmosphere, but in my opinion these things make the ghost scene less believable and which makes the ghost seem less believable so consequently the scene is less effective.

The Ethan Hawke film is slightly more recent and it tries to be more modern

and contemporary, which is a different conception of the original play, and obviously unlike the way Shakespeare would have imagined the setting appearing when he wrote the play.

There are lots of modern things used as props such as the TV, that wouldn't have been around when the play was written. Its set in a modern studio apartment with big glass windows and the setting creates a lack of atmosphere, which in turn means this version of the ghost scene doesn't do the original play justice. The actors in the 1990 version starring Mel Gibson were very convincing. Mel Gibson played Hamlet with lots of emotion and expressed the fact that Hamlet was going crazy well. He used lots of facial expressions to convey passionate anger.

He speaks in various tones, sometimes loud, sometimes more quiet, which helps to create tension. He also makes gestures with his sword, which suggests his anger and spite towards his uncle Claudius. The actor who plays the ghost is also effective, as he tells Hamlet he was murdered by his brother, by not directly saying what he means. The ghost in the Mel Gibson film lacked make-up compared to the ghost in the Kenneth Branagh and Ethan Hawke though, which slightly let the scene down, but the ghost was meant to appear alive and as a normal person though.

Overall the acting was very believable. In the Kenneth Branagh version, from 1993, the actors seem to vary the pace of the scene, Kenneth Branagh like Mel Gibson, expresses anger well, with an effective delivery of lines from all the actors. The actor who plays the ghost uses facial expressions to add to

the atmosphere. He appears with his eyes glazed over, and he looks white and pale, which is was very effective in making the ghost appear dead. The acting in the Ethan Hawke version of Hamlet is not as plausible as in the other two films.

The actors appear wooden, and there is a lack of emotion in the way both Hamlet and the Ghost speak. Overall the scene is less effective; there is no real atmosphere created by the actors and it is very tame. The costumes in the Mel Gibson film were very traditional and old fashioned which fitted in with the setting and the period the film was first set in. they were very dark which added to the mood of the scene. As in all the films the costume doesn't really make the scene any more effective, they are just elements needed in the scene, which aren't crucially important.

The make up of the ghost helps to make him look normal, not as a ghost or spirit, like in the other films. The costumes in the ghost scene of the Kenneth Branagh were also very traditional, much the same as the costumes in the Mel Gibson film, as they were both set in the same period. Hamlet's father's ghost wore lots of white make-up to make himself appear dead. This wasn't very effective as it looked cheap and over the top. In my opinion the costumes and the make-up were over the top.

In the Ethan Hawke Hamlet scene the characters wore suits and the ghost was very unlike the ghosts from the other two films, which less effective and at first you did not realise he was the ghost of Hamlet's father, which made the scene less effective and didn't create such a strong atmosphere. The

music in the Mel Gibson film started daunting and loud when Hamlet is running towards the ghost, and the music sets the pace of the lines from the two characters. There is low light and most of that comes from the moon, which is effective because it creates tension and suspense, and makes you wonder what will happen next.

The music along with the lighting create an atmosphere of tension, but seemed to make the scene into too much of a Hollywood blockbuster film, and in my opinion isn't how a classic Shakespeare ghost scene would go. In the Kenneth Branagh version, there too, is also a lot of loud music, which is fast paced and sets the scene for when the ground shakes, and then breaks for the ghost appears. The music is orchestral which in any film adds to the tension. The lighting is quite bright, which ruins the atmosphere slightly by making it less dramatic.

The Ethan Hawke film is the weakest when it comes to the lighting and the music. The music is weak and doesn't add to the atmosphere and the lighting is too dim. This is not very effective and spoils the scene. In the Mel Gibson film the atmosphere is built up in a number of ways. Hamlet is holding a sword, which suggests danger, because you, as the audience, don't know what he's going to do with it. Also the fast pace and then sudden change of the lines and music creates tension throughout the scene.

Tension is also built up by the way the characters deliver their lines. They say them quietly and in different tones, to keep the audience's interest right through the scene. In the Kenneth Branagh film, tension is built up by

making the ghost of Hamlet's father appear from the shaking ground, and there is a good use of special effects to build up the atmosphere, which makes the audience wonder what will happen next. Scenes in the orchard building after also help to build up the tension as Hamlet realises what's happened.

In the Ethan Hawke film, the latest of the three, from 2001, atmosphere and tension isn't built up very well, if at all. The setting and characters vary so much from the original script that the scene isn't as good as the other two. The lack of emotion fails to create any real tension and atmosphere in my opinion. After evaluating the three films, I stuck by my decision that the Mel Gibson version, from 1990, was a better production of Shakespeare's Hamlet, than the versions with Kenneth Branagh in (1996) and Ethan Hawke (2001).

I think this because it proved to be the more original film, and the other two films were weaker and not as good as the Mel Gibson version, when comparing different aspects of the films. The Mel Gibson film had a setting, which fitted in better with the one from the original play, the acting was more believable and the costumes and make up represented the characters emotions. The lighting wasn't as good as that of the Kenneth Branagh version, but overall I believe it was the better film at creating atmosphere and tension and therefore it was more effective.