

Compare and contrast the presentation of the supernatural analysis essay



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We decided to perform a piece of the supernatural having seen a production of a 'Woman in Black.' The texts that we used as the basis of our piece came from Hamlet, Othello, Romeo and Juliet and Macbeth.

The style of our piece was very comic and bold, all the actors with the exception of one were ghosts, which made the play unique. My particular acting role involved contributing to the 'ghostliness' of the play by enacting the outraged and far from scary ghost, Macbeth. The fact that none of us resembled anything 'scary' at all made the play all the more comic. The lighting effects we used in order to create atmosphere were not those usually associated with the supernatural. On the occasions that the lights were dim, this was not to create suspense or tension but to prevent the audience from seeing certain parts of the stage. The lighting effect most used was 'general cover' to create a sense of normality, as opposed to a supernatural sense.

The style we really wanted to portray to a modern audience was a comic one. The 'ghostly' figures were therefore portrayed as being comical and not the conventional 'spooky' that we see so often today which could be very anticlimactic, unoriginal and dull. There was still a supernatural side to the play as four out of the five actors played the part of ghosts, but there was also an amusing side to the production. This meant that we did not have to live up to the audiences' expectations of a 'horror' film only to be found at the cinema.

There was a certain subtlety to the play as the ghosts showed both emotion and feeling and also talked, thus the fact that they were ghosts was quickly

portrayed to the audience through what they said and did. Shakespeare's ghosts often appeared in his characters' nightmares, suggesting they were very unpleasant, and thus making the victims lose confidence: 'O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!' To understand what the victims were going through, some tell us the ghosts 'appal the devil.' This image can be contrasted with the ghosts in our play who made amusing comments and could not be frightening even when trying to be. But above all, they talked and acted in the same way as humans, and therefore it was hard to believe that they were ghosts. Our ghosts were not stereotypes; they did not even attempt to be 'ghost like'. No extra costumes were worn or effort made to make us look remotely frightening.

Often Shakespeare's ghosts may have been dressed in armour, which would make them look like warriors, but then Shakespeare uses language to convince the audience that they are in fact ghosts by saying things such as 'I am my father's spirit.' We tried to convey that we were ghosts by walking through doors and inspiring great fear in the victim, in this case Shakespeare. We heavily relied on Harry's acting (our Shakespeare) and in his theatrical abilities to convince the audience we were ghosts and that he was petrified. This shows a similarity to Shakespeare's plays as in his plays ghosts were not always present on stage, or they were, but they didn't resemble ghosts, and so it was up to the actor to convince the audience he was the victim of ghosts. It was harder though for the actors of Shakespeare's generation because they had no recorded sound, dry ice or smoke machines.

Elizabethan drama relied heavily on the audiences' imagination because props and scenery were very rarely used in those days. A tactic commonly used at Elizabethan theatres was trap doors (especially the Globe), for the ghost to burst through the trap door and thus scare and shock the audience. This was simple but effective. In Shakespeare's time, there was no television or films and so people were less used to seeing or hearing about 'scary' events, and thus it came as more of a shock to them when they did. They were warier and more cautious than we are today and more easily scared. This made it easier from Shakespeare's point of view, as his audience in his own time were more likely to believe in ghosts than we are now.

We are less naive, and used to seeing films involving ghosts or reading articles about possible sightings of anything supernatural. There are several forms of Japanese theatre, but 'Noh' plays deal primarily with the supernatural. Middle-aged men are the only actors who are allowed not to wear masks. Therefore any characters portraying women or old men will wear masks as well as supernatural beings such as ghosts, deities, demons, and divine beasts. Make up is not used and the masks are delicately carved and considered objects of superb beauty as well as powerful means of expression.

The mask carvings represent the type of ghost behind them. Long noses represent mischievous characters that cause trouble in Japanese villages, and horns with sharp fangs represent angry people who have turned into demons to avenge their jealousy and anger. Belief in ghosts, demons and spirits has been deep-rooted in Japanese folklore throughout history. Stories are derived from mythology and superstition.

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Folklore has evolved in order to explain or rationalize various natural events. The Japanese people believe supernatural beings are constantly around them, and thus they must impress them in the theatre, so that they look kindly upon them. The Japanese audiences are cautious as ' inexplicable phenomena arouse a fear in humankind, because there is no way for us to anticipate them or to understand their origins.'