

Evaluate how  
effectively the texts  
you essay



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Composers' representations deliberate emphasis on select situations, demonstrate conflicting perspectives through various language forms and features, which ultimately questions the audience's perspective. Through the use of dramatic and literary techniques, William Shakespeare's tragedy (play) *Julius Caesar* (1955), presents opposing views of a situation and depicts the justifications of Roman citizens. The Roman plebeians, bluntly unaware of their cumulative power, are easily manipulated by the power of language, which deters their vision of the circumstance and cause for the loss of own sense of opinion.

Similarly the film *Gladiator* (2000) by Ridley Scott exploits the range of experiences of Maximus and Commodus and their conflicting personalities, through a series of cinematic techniques. Both composers have brought forward scenarios presenting conflicting perspectives which entertain the audience through an array of textual techniques respective of their form. The assassination of Caesar in the Shakespearean tragedy *Julius Caesar* had caused conflict for the Roman citizens as there are two influential parties. The conspirators, whom believe Caesars' downfall was necessary for retaining Rome's republic, whereas Antony who deems the murder as been carried out on the terms of self gain.

Based on Brutus' flawed logical rationale, he believed that Caesar's downfall would only benefit Rome, exclaiming "not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more". Through the use of rhetoric he justifies his action in part taking in Caesar's murder. Brutus continues to use asyndeton to enhance his argument that as Caesar "was fortunate, I [Brutus] rejoice at it, as he was valiant, I honour him, but, as he was ambitious, I slew him," and it is the

parallelism between these quotations that reinforce his justification. This demonstrates how people's opinions are misguided by the use of rhetoric and it is this representation that allows responders' opinion to be shaped. Discordantly, Antony who was a strong supporter of Caesar had believed that the assassination occurred on personal gains and views this as an act of betrayal. Following Brutus' speech, the plebians had believed that "Caesar was a tyrant".

Being an admiring supporter of Caesar, Antony rectifies the public opinion, such that as he finishes they exclaim "Caesar has had great wrong". In shaping the public opinion Antony implants an aporia in interpretations while creating a binary opposite by evoking the plebians compassion for Caesar. Furthermore Antony ironically states "I am no orator, as Brutus is..

. for I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth, action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech to stir men's blood." The repetition of 'nor' amplifies the irony of his ability to re-shape the plebians perspective. "By permission" Antony's ironic repetition speaking well of Brutus as "an honourable man," not only challenges Brutus' honour but also subtly implies the conspirators underlying evil purpose. In Julius Caesar, Shakespeare portrays conflicts on many levels by using both language and dramatic techniques.

Antony's skilled use of rhetoric and diction is immediately apparent within his opening lines, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!" Unlike Brutus's salutation, Antony is shown to address the crowd in blank verse rather than prose, enriched by the use of iambic pentameter, he brings a different rhythm and pace to his speech. Conflict is also shown in the scene

where Cassius plans Caesar's assassination. This portrayal of evil is highlighted by the pathetic fallacy of "thunder still" in the background as Cassius plans the conspiracy. Most of the conflicts arise from and revolve around the murder of Caesar and its subsequent result in the declaration of Rome as either being a republic or imperialist.

Through the Roman citizens in Julius Caesar, Shakespeare conveys that there are many possible outlooks on a tight situation. With every justice comes an evil and this "can take many forms," the conflict is explored in Gladiator is emphasised through differing personalities. The plot of Scott's film Gladiator revolves around the journey of Maximus', a victorious Roman "general who became a slave. The slave who became a gladiator. The gladiator who defied an emperor".

Maximus' heroic traits contrast Commodus - Caesar's son who "is not a moral man". Commodus has his "own virtues...

ambition," this is highlighted after the victory of Germania, where he offers Maximus a position as a loyal server asking "can I trust you when the time comes?" during the dialogue "when the time comes" Caesar is depicted in the medium shot being helped down from his high seat, by men close to him, which foreshadows his murder by his "close" son and his subsequent loss of power. Commodus is a power hungry visionary who tries to manipulate Maximus, ironically claiming that the "senators scheme squabble and flatter and deceive". On the other hand Maximus is depicted as symbolic of just, being closely related to the motif dirt and hands signifying his humbleness, literally being down to earth. Before heading off to a serious battle, a close

up of Maximus' hands show them picking up dirt and rubbing it on his hands. This perhaps suggests his terrestrial position. After the victory of Germania, another close up of Maximus' hands show bloody scars on the palms, of which he later exclaims "dirt cleans off a lot easier than blood," displaying merciful qualities of justice.

Scott uses cinematic techniques to further highlight the power of "the mob," where "Rome is the mob," and their support for Maximus. Evidence of this is seen in an establishing shot of the Colosseum chanting "Maximus". In the same scene, heroic non-diegetic music is used with the camera's close up shot of Maximus' face, after finishing victoriously from the reenactment of the battle of Carthage. This highlights Maximus' powerful but humble figure. In *Gladiator*, Scott personifies justice and evil, as Maximus and Commodus.

Arising conflict in the film is complex and is mainly represented through the two characters and their differing personalities. However Commodus attempts to blur this with through his use of hypophora exclaiming "Are we so different you and I? You take life when you have to, as I do". However through the use of chiaroscuro, the flamboyant emperor and dirt covered Maximus, a clear picture is painted to further emphasise the difference between the two. Through Scott's use of cinematic techniques the selection of emphasis on the contrasting characters is at the heart of representation and clearly demonstrates the conflicting personality traits and virtues.

Composers deliberately use language features and forms to convey their outlooks. Both Shakespeare and Scott have succeeded in doing this in their respective text and by doing so, questions the audience's opinion. The sole

purpose of composers is to create a text which brings forward situations where conflicting perspectives are present.