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1. Historical perspective

Introduction to Shakespeare on Film

A recognition of the importance of making Shakespeare's texts 'come alive' lies behind requirements for students to experience the plays in performance, whether theatrical, audio or film. Film adaptations of Shakespeare are probably the most easily available resource for teachers to use to fulfil this requirement, with the range of different interpretations of Shakespeare's plays and the ready access to media technology through which to view these films creating an exciting new dimension to this curriculum area.

There seems to be a general consensus amongst English teachers that active approaches to teaching Shakespeare are most effective in terms of students' understanding and enjoyment of his works. Similarly, film viewing in the classroom should not be a passive process: students should not simply observe and absorb what they see, but engage with film texts and develop critical responses to them. The student materials included in this resource have been created to engage learners actively in their viewing of film.

Before watching a film version, it is expected that students are familiar with the whole play and have read the set scenes closely. By working with film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays – and the more versions of the same play the better – we hope students will have opportunities to reflect on how and why these stories are still kept alive today.

Shakespeare and the National Curriculum

Shakespeare currently holds a privileged position in the English National Curriculum, The first National Curriculum introduced back in 1990 made Shakespeare a compulsory element in the teaching of English, and then in 1993/4 Shakespeare became part of the KS3 national testing system (SATs). After the Dearing report of 1995, the study of a Shakespeare play was required for GCSE Literature and again Shakespeare became the only compulsory writer on the Literature syllabi. Since 1999, the study of a Shakespeare play has been a compulsory requirement of GCSE English Language.

Debates around the compulsory teaching of Shakespeare have tended to centre on questions of cultural hegemony and social elitism. Film, by contrast, is a popular medium and by teaching young people the critical skills with which to deconstruct both directors' interpretations of Shakespeare's texts and the texts themselves, teachers have an opportunity to approach this subject afresh. The combination of classic texts reconstructed by modern filmmakers goes to the heart of the debate about the position of Shakespeare in schools and provides teachers with a rich source of stimulus material for their students.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES - ACTIVITY SHEETS

The activity sheets in this section work as a stimulus for students who have a familiarity with the chosen set text and who are about to explore the film version. Asking students to engage with some broader questions at this stage should help inform the direction they take with their study, encouraging them to re-evaluate the texts and to take ownership of their responses to them. Beginning with what they already know of Shakespeare, they are invited to consider why the plays are still studied and performed, as well as thinking about why –- and to whom –- Shakespeare's work is still considered important. The value placed by modern society on the plays, and film interpretations of them, is also explored.

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Historical Perspective: Student Activity Sheet 1

The Value of Shakespeare

The name Shakespeare is a very familiar one, not only in the UK but also around the world. In his lifetime, Shakespeare produced plays and poetry that continue to be read and performed today. Although he wasn't the only writer of his time to make a name for himself, he remains the best known.

So how is it that a man writing over four hundred years ago is 'famous' today? Modern celebrities tend to get their fame by being in the public eye as much as possible; Shakespeare died in 1616, but his name lives on today – in various ways

Consuming Shakespeare

Consider the many forms in which you can buy Shakespeare:

Books of play texts
Film adaptations of the plays on DVD and in the cinema
Theatre performances, both professional and amateur
Ballet – for example, the ballet of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet
Historical and biographical artefacts and information (books, guided tours etc.)
Tourist sites – The Globe; Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon
Souvenirs – Shakespeare's image, or his words, on mugs, pens, tea towels etc.

Think about the purpose of these different items – for example, they might be forms of entertainment; for education; a kind of 'cultural' experience or they may just have 'novelty' value. Now try to fit each of these into the table below. Are there any that fit into more than one column – does it depend on your own viewpoint?

NOVELTY VALUE	CULTURAL VALUE	ENTERTAINMENT VALUE	EDUCATIONAL VALUE

- Can you think of any more examples to add?

Image problems?

Shakespeare has a certain image: there's an idea that his plays are only for certain people. However, it is said that in his lifetime, Shakespeare's plays would have been similar to TV soap operas today as they had such a wide appeal to the masses.

Now look at your completed version of the table and discuss the following:
1. What sort of prices do you think might be attached to these different items?
2. What sorts of people might buy these things?
3. Do you think different items might have different 'audiences'?
4. Where in the table might you place a DVD of a Shakespeare film and why?

Historical Perspective: Student Activity Sheet 2

Shakespeare and Culture
So Shakespeare is well known – or his name is, at least – and some of the value that can be placed on his name has to do with 'culture'. Culture is a word with a wide range of meanings, but one definition of culture that is useful to understanding Shakespeare is:

CULTURE: different tastes in arts and use of leisure time

This definition can be broken down again into two more categories: there are more varieties of culture than just these two, but they make a good starting point for our purposes. Read these definitions with a partner and make sure you understand them:

HIGH CULTURE describes the arts (e.g. music, dance, theatre, literature) that are valued most highly by the wealthy and powerful in our society such as politicians, judges or the Royal family

POPULAR CULTURE describes the arts (e.g. music, dance, theatre, literature) that are most popular with ordinary people in our society such as workers, students and so on

Now look at the list of cultural activities below. See if you can categorise these different activities as either high culture or popular culture, according to the definitions in each column above. With a partner, decide which column you think each activity belongs in by filling the chart on the folowing page. You might decide some fit in both columns.

Cultural activities
1.   Going to an opera
2.   Going to see a ballet
3.   Listening to hip hop
4.   Visiting the British Museum
5.   Taking a tour of Stratford-upon-Avon where Shakespeare lived
6.   Listening to a gospel choir in the Royal Albert Hall
7.   Break dancing
8.   Visiting the National Gallery
9.   Reading a novel by Charles Dickens
10.   Seeing a play at the theatre by Shakespeare
11.   Going to the cinema to see a Hollywood action blockbuster
12.   Going to see an X-Factor winner in concert
13.   Taking a tour of Graceland where Elvis Presley lived
14.   Going to the cinema to see a film adaptation of a Shakespeare play
15.   Watching a film adaptation of a Shakespeare play on DVD at home
16.   Reading a magazine about celebrity lifestyles
17.   Listening to a radio interview with the winner of a national TV talent show
18.   Reading a Shakespeare play
19.   Listening to a Shakespeare play on the radio
20.   Watching a music video channel

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HIGH CULTURE	POPULAR CULTURE

Now look at the list under each heading. Where does Shakespeare appear?
- Do you think Shakespeare is best described as an example of high or popular culture? Why?
- And what about film – do you think film is an example of high or popular culture?
- Do you think all kinds of films fit under the same heading, or does it depend on different factors?
If so, what factors make a difference to whether a film is 'high' culture or 'popular' culture?

Historical Perspective: Student Activity Sheet 3

Shakespeare and Culture - Extension Task

1. With a partner, read through the statements below. Each of these statements represents a viewpoint about Shakespeare and his plays.

Your task is to sort these statements into two categories, according to their meaning, using the headers in the table overleaf to guide you.

a. Shakespeare's plays cannot be relevant to cultures outside of England because the context in which they were written and performed is essentially English.

b. Shakespeare films in other languages and those made in Hollywood do not belong to the English cultural heritage and should not be used to teach Shakespeare in schools.

c. Shakespeare films will always be part of English culture regardless of the nationality of their producers and therefore, help to broaden and modernise the definition of English culture to include a global perspective.

d. It is valid for people from countries outside England to interpret Shakespeare in their own language and from their own cultural perspective. The themes of Shakespeare's plays are universal and therefore contain meaning for all people, irrespective of their nationality.

e. The production of Hollywood versions of Shakespeare's texts highlights the concept of Shakespeare as consumable commodity – something we buy into. These films are made to make a profit not to teach universal human values. It is important to understand the position of Shakespeare as a commodity rather than simply as an emblem of English cultural heritage.

f. The establishment of the film industry in the last sixty years has opened up new ways to interpret Shakespeare's plays providing opportunities to highlight contemporary themes against a classic narrative structure.

g. Shakespeare films should be adapted only in the original language as this is where the true meaning lies. Film interpretations that do not use the original language from the text lose important meaning. They might be interesting films, but they are not really Shakespeare and should not be used in schools to teach Shakespeare's plays.

h. English cultural heritage is corrupted by modern film interpretations of Shakespeare's plays, which take the stories out of their original context and add in modern meanings. These film interpretations should not be used to teach Shakespeare in schools as they confuse children about what Shakespeare really is about.

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Historical Perspective: Student Activity Sheet 3 (contd)

2. Once you have sorted the statements, discuss which out of the two column headings you most agree with and why. What do you think are the flaws in the opposite viewpoint?

3. Look again at the argument you most agree with and sort the statements into an order of priority, putting the most important one at the top and the least important at the bottom. Try to add some more statements to support this general point of view.

Understanding Shakespeare in the original is essential to appreciate English cultural heritage.	Shakespeare has significance that is broader than England's cultural heritage.
	e.g. Shakespeare is a dead playwright whose work cannot be owned by any one culture and is, therefore, free to be interpreted from any perspective.

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2. Choosing a Film: Guidelines for Teachers

Which films?

As both film text and play text are to be studied together, it is strongly recommended that teachers explore the set film versions before making the decision about which play to study with their students. Copies of the film versions are available through online sites, with *amazon.co.uk* carrying the widest stock of titles. Some of the film titles may take longer to track down than others so again, bear this in mind in your planning. In the various section of the Film Space's Film and Shakespeare site links are provided for you to purchase different versions of the filmed adaptations which are featured in the study materials.

Depending on your chosen set text, you may have a choice of film versions that includes classic adaptations, modern productions and even films which offer a loose interpretation of the play text.

How do you decide which one is best to use with your class?

1. Expand their horizons. There is a temptation when showing a film version of a Shakespeare play automatically to choose the version with the most famous actors, as it is more instantly recognisable. Depending on the class, their ability, their knowledge of the text and their previous exposure to studying Shakespeare, you may find a less familiar version of the play can be a thoroughly engaging and stimulating experience. For example when studying *Macbeth*, opting to show Akiro Kurosawa's *Throne of Bloo*d provides opportunities to discuss the universal appeal of Shakespeare whilst introducing a new cultural context to the story. Even if you feel your class would find a film such as this difficult to access in its entirety, you could still consider including key sequences for comparative analysis.

2. Don't limit yourself to one film. Watch as many versions of the play with your class as possible. Obviously, you will be limited by time constraints and are unlikely to have sufficient time to view a number of films all the way through. However, try to show your class *three very different versions* of the scenes they are studying. This way they will gain a deeper understanding of the range of interpretations and meanings offered by different directors. If you watch only one version of the play, there is a risk that some students will see this as the authoritative film narrative rather than an individual director's interpretation.

3. Challenge their expectations. Some students come to their GCSE study of Shakespeare with a perception of the plays as being boring and irrelevant to their world. This can be reinforced by the costumes, settings and performance styles of some film adaptations. Be mindful of this when selecting the film version to show your class. Where and when is the film set? What are the characters wearing and what are the reasons for these costume choices? Will the style of the film confirm or confound your students' expectations of Shakespeare? *Macbeth on the Estate* (Bogdanov 1998), for example, updates the story to a modern setting and introduces contemporary parallels that your students may not expect to experience when studying Shakespeare.

4. Consider the running time. It is important to watch the film first yourself in order to ascertain the length of the whole film, and of the scene(s) to be studied. Depending on how the director has interpreted the scene in the film adaptation, you may find it is treated at great length or not in much detail. You may wish more able students to explore the reasons for these production choices.

Ideally, the students should view the film in one sitting although this is often not practical in terms of timetables. If viewing needs to be segmented, try to avoid a situation where your class has to watch the last ten minutes or so at the start of a new lesson as this will fragment the film's dramatic impact and some of its significance may be lost. It's probably better to view the film in a few medium-length sittings if it is not possible to watch it all at once.

5. Know your audience. No one knows your class better than you. When exploring the film versions on offer, you may feel that different students will find different films more accessible and engaging than others. In this case, you may wish to arrange opportunities for alternative versions to be viewed, depending on the resources and time available to you. Here are some possible approaches:

a) For whole-class viewing, choose something accessible to all students. Introduce the more challenging film interpretations when you analyse the set scenes for close study.
b) Choose a film adaptation that you think will challenge the most able in your class (e.g. Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* 1957 / Cukor's *Romeo and Juliet* 1936) and build extra time into the viewing to pause for regular discussion activities. Depending on your choice of text, this method may be your only option as you may find the film version available requires some mediation during viewing.
c) Divide your class into two or three groups according to their levels of interest, motivation and ability and have each group watch a different film version. This approach provides ample opportunities for discussion between groups during and after viewing. Be aware, however, that this approach requires you to have one large space, or several rooms with more than one DVD playing facility and students who are able to concentrate in a room with a degree of background noise. You may be able to make reciprocal arrangements within your department to make this approach work in practice.

6. Be aware of the production history. There are a number of filmed versions of Shakespeare's plays but not all of these are cinema-released feature films and therefore differ in terms of production, style and purpose. Some are filmed records of stage productions (e.g. Philip Casson's RSC production of *Macbeth* with Judi Dench and Ian McKellan) whilst others are made for television (Jack Gold's BBC *The Merchant of Venice*). All are suitable for analysis but you should make your students aware of the difference in terms of context, audience and production. This is particularly important when you compare versions during the close analysis of the set scenes.

7. Be prepared for student absences. Students missing a viewing lesson can be a common problem when working with films in the classroom, so you should plan for this eventuality. Depending on your schedule, you may wish to offer lunchtime or afterschool catch-up viewing sessions. If you can group students together who have missed a lesson, they could borrow the film to watch together; or, if other members of your department are working on the same material, there may be opportunities for students to watch the missed part of the film with another class. In terms of curriculum access, you should ensure all students have the opportunity to watch the film if they have missed it due to an authorised absence.

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8. Understand the basics of copyright and classroom viewing. You may have seen copyright notices at the front of videos and DVDs that outline a range of exclusions to showing the film in public. Although these can seem prohibitive, according to information from the UK Intellectual Property Office, it is acceptable to show films to students in the classroom provided that the viewing of the film forms part of their learning and is not for the purposes of entertainment. The information below is taken from the UKIPO website.

A number of exceptions apply to schools, universities and other educational establishments. These are:

Performing, playing or showing *copyright works in a school, university or other educational establishment for educational purposes. However, it only applies if the audience is limited to teachers, pupils and others directly connected with the activities of the establishment. It will not generally apply if parents are in the audience. Examples of this are showing a video for English or drama lessons and the teaching of music. It is* **unlikely** *to include the playing of a video during a wet playtime purely to amuse the children.*
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/copy/c-other/c-exception/c-exception-teaching.htm

Schools should note, however, that making additional copies of films for classroom viewing would usually constitute a breach of copyright. For further information,
see: http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/copy/c-applies/c-tvfilm.htm

A range of factors might govern a teacher's, or a department's decision to study a particular play and to explore particular film versions. Films are commercial products, as well as creative and cultural constructs and it is interesting to engage students with some exploration of who the target audience for the different film interpretations seems to be.

The activity sheet in this section explores the ways in which those physical products – copies of the play texts and film adaptations of the plays, either at the cinema or on a home entertainment format – are positioned to appeal to different target audiences.

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Choosing a Film: Student Activity

Comparing the texts: book and DVD

Whichever Shakespeare play you are studying, you will be exploring both the written text of the play and at least one filmmaker's interpretation of that written text.

Selling Shakespeare

Both the DVD and the book are, in their own way 'commercial' objects: the copy of the play text and the film are both sold at some point for a profit.

If you are buying your own copy of the play, you may look at the front to see if it is a 'student edition', or if it contains additional notes that you might find useful. In this way the cover is acting as an advertisement – providing reasons for you to choose to buy this particular version rather than another.

The same is true of a DVD cover for a film: it is designed to give consumers information about the film, to give a sense of the type of production it is and who it might appeal to. Perhaps the film won an award – or several – or is famous for the performances of particular actors. These facts might be used to try and 'sell' the film to an audience.

Fill in the grid below, using the prompt questions to help you analyse and compare the covers of both the written and film texts. This will help you think about the different ways in which the plays are presented or 'packaged' for different purposes and audiences. It will also help you practise making comparisons between different text types.

	1. Images	2. Colour	3. Layout	4. Text	5. Font	6. Audience
Book Cover						
DVD Sleeve						

Prompt questions

1. Which *images* have been used? What do they show you about the play and why do you think these have been chosen?
2. How is *colour* used to convey the mood of the text?
3. Consider the *layout* devices: boxes, banners, logos etc. – what do these tell you about the product?
4. Look closely at the *text* on the cover: what information are we given about the product? How is the play described? Who does it seem to be aimed at?
5. Notice the *font*: consider its type, style, size, colour, positioning etc. What does the choice of font suggest about the play or film?
6. What other information, if any, is presented? What does this tell you about the *target* audience of each text? How can you tell?

Extension Activity

If the film was originally released in the cinema, it's likely that a film poster and a trailer were made to publicise its release. These are also a form of marketing, designed to promote the film for a particular *'target'* audience: to encourage people to watch it at the cinema or on a home entertainment format.

This extension activity gives you the opportunity to investigate the nature and purpose of this additional marketing.

1. Choose a film version of your set play that was released at the cinema.

2. Search for a poster and a trailer promoting this version.

3. Examine in detail the poster and trailer using the following prompts:
•   What do they suggest about the film?
•   How is this information communicated?
•   Who does the film seem to be aimed at? How can you tell?

4. Search for reviews of the film.
•   How did critics receive it?
•   How was it compared to previous adaptations and to Shakespeare's original text?
•   Would the reviews make you want to see the film? Explain your reasons.

3. Film Language: Approaches to Reading Film

Just as the language of Shakespeare's plays can define character and action, shaping audience responses, so the language of film is carefully constructed to convey meaning and nuance. Yet whatever form it takes, language has a tendency to be subjective and one person's reading of a text might reveal a very different interpretation to another's.

In order to compare written texts with film versions, students need an understanding of the ways in which each text type creates meaning. They also need the right vocabulary with which to articulate their observations. This section explores the key techniques by which film creates effects and conveys meaning in comparison to written texts and other performance and presentation versions.

The *Film Language: glossary of terminology* in this section is designed to give students a basic vocabulary with which to express key concepts; it should also help them formulate their responses as they watch, giving them a greater understanding of how film texts are constructed and of the effects of these choices on audiences.

Text – performance – film

It is important for students to consider a film interpretation of a play text as a creative construct in its own right, and therefore one of a huge range of possible interpretations of the play, rather than as a substitute for the text. Whilst performance aspects – from props and sets to gesture and intonation – are one means of interpreting and presenting the text, there are more things at work within a film production than just these.

A stage director, set designers and performers can bring a whole range of meaning to a play in performance at the theatre, through the choices they make about the script, the set and props, costume, performance, lighting and so on.

Filmmakers need to make choices about all of these elements, as well as making decisions about cinematography. Film offers techniques for conveying meaning that are clearly distinct from theatrical performance, such as cutaways and reaction shots, close-ups, high and low angle shots, zoom and tracking shots not to mention the movement from shot-to-shot created in the editing process. Camerawork can make the viewing subjective and biased; as a filter through which we see the action, film can manipulate audience responses to and engagement with the characters.

The examples below give a starting point for exploring different techniques for conveying meaning:

PLAY TEXT – choice of metaphor to describe character
PERFORMANCE – choice of costume to convey key characteristics

PLAY TEXT – use of rhyming couplet to close a scene
FILM – slow fade to black as rhyming couplet is heard in voiceover

PERFORMANCE – movement and gesture of actor suggests a state of indecision
FILM – range of rapidly edited close-ups from different angles establish the character's vacillation

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Using film language: a film still

Within a film, the director has carefully constructed each shot to have a specific effect on the audience as they view. So, when your students look at a still image (or 'still') taken from a particular moment in a film, it is possible to examine the shot in detail to explore the ways in which the director is presenting this moment to the viewing audience. It is recommended that as you watch a film version of your set text with your class, you pause the film at key moments in order to discuss how meaning is created on screen.

Areas for analysis

The first two aspects below – framing and composition and shot type – relate specifically to film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, whereas the components of mise en scène can also apply to stage performance. During the preparation stages for the final tasks, students should explore details of cinematography as well as performance aspects to ensure that they have the best chance of producing a detailed response in the assessment.

Framing and composition

The way that a director has put the shot together can have a huge impact on an audience's reaction to that moment in the film. In western cultures text is read left to right, top to bottom and images tend to be 'read', or taken in by the eye, in the same order. According to this principal, the position of an object or a character within a shot can influence the audience's response to them in that scene, or in the film as a whole.

Shot type

Different shot types can have particular effects on an audience: a close-up can reveal details of character and emotion, whilst a long shot can be used to establish clearly a location or depict a crowd scene. *The Film Language: glossary of terminology* offers further information about shot types and camera movement.

Aspects of mise en scène

This French term is used to refer to everything that can be seen in a shot. This sounds complex but can be broken down for students into the following areas:
• setting and props
• costume and make-up
• body language and facial expression
• lighting and colour

The student activity sheets accompanying this section offer suggested approaches to analysing both the still and the moving image and can be used to help structure written responses or to make detailed comparisons between texts. You might want to allocate different areas for analysis to different groups in your class; a still image from Castellani's *Romeo and Juliet* (1954) is provided for initial discussion.

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Film Language: Student Activity 1

Text – performance – film

In the play text, the words on the page have to do all the work; in the theatre, actors and actresses bring the words to life. In the cinema, the director can do many more things which can help bring the words to life.

But what are the differences in the ways that the story is told? If we are reading, it is up to us to try to imagine what a character would look like. This is obviously not the case with a theatre production or a film. We can actually see someone playing the role.

- What differences are there between these three ways of telling – through film, through performance and through a written play text?
- What are the techniques available in each medium that help us to understand what is happening?

Below is a list of techniques used by playwrights, theatre directors and filmmakers to communicate meaning. Try to decide where each technique should fit in the chart on the following page, by thinking about how meaning is communicated in each. Some might fit in more than one column.

1. Name of character speaking
2. Use of lighting
3. Play title
4. Choice of costume
5. List of characters
6. Stage directions suggest action
7. Lines to be spoken by character
8. Casting of famous actors
9. Recorded music
10. Range of camera shots
11. Act and Scene numbers – divide story
12. Outdoor and indoor locations
13. Live music
14. Exits and Entrances describe character movement – on and off stage
15. Range of different camera angles
16. List of characters in play
17. Voiceover option for prologue/soliloquy
18. Range of scene changes

PLAY TEXT	THEATRE PRODUCTION	FILMED ADAPTATION

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Film Language: Student Activity 2

Image analysis: a guide to approaching any still

1. Framing and composition

When you first look at a still image from a film, make notes on the following:
a) What is in the foreground and background of each image?
b) What is to the left of the image and what is to the right?
c) What meanings can you make from this arrangement?
d) What position do the characters occupy within the shot and what does this say about their relationship to each other?

2. Shot type

The *Film Language: glossary and terminology* sheet will give you some ideas about shot types and camera movement if you are unsure.
a) What type of shot has been chosen for the image you are looking at?
b) What effect does this have on what you can see in the shot and your general reaction to it?
c) If you know what happens before and after this shot, think about whether the camera is static or moving during this sequence and consider how the camera movement influences your reaction to the scene.

3. Aspects of mise en scène

This French term is used to refer to everything that can be seen in a shot. It can be broken down into the following areas:

Setting and props
a) What can you establish about the setting and location from this shot?
b) What props are visible and what ideas or associations do they convey?
c) Is there a significant object positioned at a particular point in the shot (for example in the centre)? What do you think this might imply?

Costume and make-up
d) What choices has the director made in terms of costume and make-up for the different characters in the shot?
e) What do these choices tell us about those characters' role and status?

Body language and facial expression
f) What does each character's facial expression suggest about their emotional and mental state at this moment in the film?
g) Do characters' body language and expression suggest anything about their relationship with other characters in the shot? Explain your answer.

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Lighting and colour

h) How would you describe the light in the scene, and what atmosphere does it create?

i) Does the lighting draw our attention to any person or object? Or are light and shadow used to hide a person or object?

j) If the shot you are looking at is in colour, explain how certain colours have been used and what ideas they suggest about characters, setting and objects.

4. Drawing conclusions

a) What do you think is happening at this moment in the film?

b) How do you think this moment has come about and what might be about to happen in the next shot? How do you come to your conclusions?

c) How significant does this moment seem to be in terms of the dramatic action in the film as a whole?

d) From looking at this image, what impression do you have of the director's vision for this moment in the film, and for the film as a whole?

Analysing an image

Look closely at the image below. Using the prompt questions above, try to describe what meaning is created and how this is achieved in this still image from Castellani's *Romeo and Juliet* (1954).

Film Language: Student Help Sheet

A glossary of terminology

Shot type

The way the camera is used to frame a scene can create meaning in a film.

Long shot – shows background, establishes where the scene is set; orientates the viewer
Mid shot – shows torso and some background
Close-up – head and shoulders, usually used to show emotion. Draws our attention to face or object
Point-of-view shot – helps us to see the action from a character's viewpoint and thus empathise with them
High angle shot – camera looks down on person/object, can make them look vulnerable
Low angle shot – camera looks up at someone or something: can make them appear powerful

Camera movement

In the same way that framing can be used to enhance our involvement in the film action, the way in which a camera is moved can direct our attention or emphasise a particular viewpoint. Camera movements include:

Panning shot – where the camera moves slowly across from side to side from a fixed axis
Tilt shot – where the camera moves up and down from a fixed axis
Crane shot – where the camera, mounted on a crane, moves around at a distance above ground level
Tracking shot – where the camera follows the action, moving along tracks laid for that purpose, often pulling backwards from a scene or moving forwards into it
Hand held – this technique is often used to connect the audience to the viewpoint of a particular character or characters

Mise en scène

This term is used in film to describe what is in the frame and why. There are several areas to consider when exploring mise en scène:

• Setting and props
• Costume and make-up
• Body language and facial expression
• Lighting and colour

Each of these factors combines to give the shot a certain 'look' or 'feel'. What is put in or left out of a shot can make a big difference to the signals we receive about what sort of film it is and how we are supposed to feel at this point. For instance, lighting quickly creates an atmosphere on screen. Dark and shadowy lighting might be used to convey a sense of unease, whilst bright lighting might be used to suggest happiness or optimism. The filmmaker can use lighting to draw our attention to a person/object or equally, to hide them.

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Sound
There are three elements to a film soundtrack:

Dialogue – the exact choice of language in a film adaptation of a Shakespeare play can have particular impact on the 'feel' of the film as a whole, as well as on our responses to characters at key moments
Music – this creates atmosphere, affecting us on a very emotional level
Sound effects – again, very effective at creating atmosphere and emphasising action

Editing
The term editing refers to the changing shots within a piece of film. The speed with the film moves from shot-to-shot has an important role in creating atmosphere. For instance, a fight scene may feature rapid editing, moving quickly from shot-to-shot, building excitement and tension. A relaxed conversation between friends, on the other hand, will probably feature slow editing so the audience can take in the details on the screen.

Title graphics
The ways in which the title and credits of a film are presented, and the colours chosen for both them and the background, give an indication of the type of film we can expect. For instance, film adaptations of the tragedies might employ a red or a black font, whereas a comedy might use lighter, brighter colours.

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4. Reading Texts – Analysing a Film Sequence

Unpacking meaning

Comparison between film text and play text requires a close knowledge of how both text types use specific language devices to create and convey meaning. Just as with textual analysis, an exploration of film requires students to have knowledge and understanding of key details. Once students are broadly familiar with a film text, they should be guided to a close reading of a short sequence within the film to focus their analysis. Analysing a sequence in detail enables students to identify aspects of the language of film, and make careful comparison between texts in terms of how they create meaning and effect thus developing and expanding analytical and comparative skills.

Characters' thoughts and feelings, themes and dramatic effects are visually coded in film with the following elements of film language:

•   Mise en scène (setting, costume, props, lighting and performance)
•   Sound
•   Editing
•   Cinematography (including shot type, composition and camera movement)

The key to reading film is to extract these elements of film language and identify how they work together to convey meaning visually and aurally to audiences.

Approaching a sequence for analysis

You may find that the set scenes in a particular film version occur in a different order to the play text; also, dialogue and/or action may be missing, added or adapted. The important thing to remember when approaching the film versions with students is to avoid the assumption that there is a 'right' dramatic or cinematic interpretation: the main thing to consider is the variety of possible interpretations of the text. You may find some set scenes are quite lengthy in proportion to the duration of the whole film: in these cases, it can be very useful to break the scene up into smaller segments for study. As with the play text, students should consider how set scenes on film convey themes, and depict characters, in comparison to the text as a whole.

There are many different ways to approach an analysis of the set scenes on film. On the next pages are two different styles of question and approach, one based on Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet and one on Orson Welles' *Macbeth.* The questions on the film adaptation of *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* invites students to explore the set scene on film, with questions in the format what, why, how and to what effect. The questions on *Macbeth* break down the set scene on film into aspects of film language that could, for example, be given to groups to explore in detail.

Whilst these questions focus on particular set texts and film versions, the principles of the approach can be adapted for use with any film text and the language of the questions adapted to suit different classes and individual learners. It is suggested that students use the *Film Language: glossary of terminology* in writing their responses.

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Analysing a Sequence – Prompts for writing

William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet – Baz Luhrmann

Act 2 Scene 2 *(time code for DVD/Blu-ray: 27.36 – 32.00)*

How…
1.   How is music used in the sequence? How does it affect our emotions and tell us what is going on in the text?
2.   How does the camera move the second time Romeo kisses Juliet? What does this add to our interpretation of their feelings?
3.   How does the camera move when Juliet finds out Romeo is a Montague? What meaning does this convey?
4.   How do costume choices reflect the meaning you can interpret from the text?
5.   How is a sense of urgency and anxiety created?
6.   How is the religious context of the 14-line sonnet visually and aurally presented?

What…
7.   What elements make the sequence feel modern?
8.   What elements make the sequence feel traditional or 'Shakespearian'?
9.   What can we understand about the relationship between the characters by types of shot and camera movement used?
10.   What elements of the dialogue from the play text are used here, and what is left out?

Why…
11.   Why do you think the director moves the action into the lift for part of the scene?

To what effect…
12.   To what effect is editing used to convey the perspectives of different characters during the scene?

Act 2 Scene 2 *(time code for DVD/Blu-ray: 34.11 – 43.16)*

What…
1.   What do costumes add to this sequence, and in particular to the representation of the characters?

Why…
2.   Why do you think the director has chosen to include the swimming pool in the setting?
3.   Can you notice any religious iconography? Why do you think this has been included?

How…
4.   How is lighting associated with the characters? Consider Romeo's lines beginning 'Juliet is the sun' and how both characters are visually represented with light and dark. Shots of interest are: 35.08 – 35.56 and 39.55 – 40.08.
5.   How do the shots containing the security guard impact upon the scene? Think about comedy and dramatic effect of this addition to the text.

To what effect...
6.   To what effect is music used throughout the sequence? What does it add to the emotional impact of the action?

Analysing a Sequence – Prompts for writing

Macbeth – Orson Welles

Act 2 Scene 2 *(time code for DVD/Blu-ray: 26:30 – 32.05)*

Mise en scène:
1. *Setting and location* – In the play text, Act 2 Scene 2 is set inside the castle, and yet it is filmed here as an exterior location against the backdrop of a seemingly ruined medieval castle. What does the set design add to our understanding of the following aspects in this scene: themes; characters; mood and atmosphere; narrative?

2. *Lighting* –**Look at 27:48 – 28:05**. How do the lighting choices:
a)   Represent Macbeth's character
b)   Suggest how Macbeth is feeling and thinking
c)   Signal the themes and motifs in the text
d)   Highlight the narrative action – his act of murder and its aftermath
e)   Create mystery and suspense?
Are we able to engage with Macbeth here or do we feel distanced from him?
How is Lady Macbeth lit in comparison?

Editing:
3. The scene is shot in one long take with no cuts and no change of shot type. What dramatic effect does this choice have on the action unfolding on screen?
4.. There are no close-ups or reaction shots in this scene. Why do you think this choice has been made? Think about how we are able to interact and engage with the characters through different shots.

Cinematography:
5. Framing – **Look at 28:15 – 29:35**
This particular sequence is composed as one static shot – the camera doesn't move and neither do the characters. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth remain in the same position. This unconventional framing is a deliberate choice made for effect. Look at the positioning of the characters in the frame and the distance between them. What does this suggest about:
a)   The relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth
b)   How we are supposed to feel about the characters
c)   The roles and motives of the characters in the text

Sound:
6. The play text for this scene makes reference to a range of sounds. How does the director make use of sound used in this sequence? What can you hear?
What atmosphere does the sound create? Consider the contrast between the loud and quiet sounds, and what sounds are use to convey mood. How does the knocking at the end of the sequence affect the tone?

Examples of sequence analysis

The two paragraphs below give an indication of the kind of response that can be produced through a close, detailed analysis of the moving image text. Whilst a shot-by-shot account would not necessarily be the best approach to take during the assessment, this kind of writing could be framed as a preparatory task focused on a particular moment or aspect of a film production. These paragraphs are based on sample questions, although they are not presented as 'student-style' responses.

Julius Caesar, Joseph Mankiewicz 1953

…As Cassius questions whether Antony's loyalty is to the conspirators or to Caesar, the director uses a two-shot that positions Cassius slightly higher than Antony, thus reflecting Antony's vulnerability amongst these men. The camera then fixes on Antony as he reasserts his love for them all whilst hoping they will give reasons "Why and wherein Caesar was dangerous". The contrast between the open discussion as to whether Antony should speak at Caesar's funeral and the continued conspiring of Cassius and Brutus is suggested in the framing and shot formation. As Cassius ushers Brutus to one side: "Brutus, a word with you…", the camera tracks their movement away from Antony. The next brief shot is a medium close-up cut away of Antony's brooding perspective on this. The camera then returns to Cassius appealing to Brutus for Antony not to speak at the funeral. At this point, the director has amended Shakespeare's original text and after Cassius's summing up of his position, "I know not what may fall; I like it not", he exits the scene. Arguably, this reinforces Cassius's mistrust of Antony and also suggests the beginning of a rift between Cassius and Brutus…

The Merchant of Venice, Michael Radford, 2004

….When Shylock first enters the scene, the camera returns to the high angle shot of the whole courtroom establishing the narrative sequence and a sense of detachment. Ushers hold the crowd back and it becomes quiet. There is a sense of anticipation that is heightened as we cut to a long shot of Shylock, bending down to place his bag before him. The bag thuds as it hits the floor and Shylock stands before the court looking beleaguered and stubborn. The Duke's words, "What say you, Jew? We all expect a gentle answer." are delivered as the camera offers a close-up. The pun on gentle/gentile is suggested by the Duke's sideways glance to his fellow court officials, and by inference to the audience. We do not see Shylock's reaction again to being referred to as "Je'" rather than by name. The dramatic effect is heightened by our own conflicted attitudes to this de-personalisation…

5. Analysing the Requirements

Preparing for the assessment

Students are allowed to take notes and a clean copy of the play text with them into the assessment. They are not allowed to take anything that resembles a draft essay; however, there is no page restriction as to the quantity of notes students can take into the final assessment with them. Your department may wish to set more detailed guidelines within this rubric. OCR recommends that students submit their notes along with their final response at the end of the assessment.

Diagrams with key words and short quotations are a good idea, as they can help students to order their thoughts whilst avoiding the temptation to write reams of tiny notes. Students will need to comment on the film version(s) they have studied in detail in the controlled assessment, so will need to have these clearly in mind. Visual aids to jog students' memories of the film versions could be very helpful: drawings or storyboards of key shots, or labelled diagrams of sets and costumes may be very helpful for writing the final piece.

Unpacking the criteria

The available questions will change from year to year; the set scenes and occasionally, the set texts will also change. Students will not have a choice of question. However, with careful preparation and planning they should feel confident approaching the task during the final assessment.

Preparing your students

During the preparation stages, students should develop their knowledge of the play text and their familiarity with one or more film interpretation of the play. They should also be made aware of the requirements of the assessment, in terms of the time available, the style of task and the marking criteria their work will be assessed by. As you prepare them for the written task, you will of course have these requirements in mind and whilst their assessed piece cannot be marked and re-drafted, you can advise the whole class on stylistic elements and approaches that will help improve their chances of a higher grade overall.

General pointers

Comparison – A key element of AO3 is comparison of detail and points of connection between texts. Clearly, students should show an ability to compare the play text with the film; additionally, if they have watched more than one version of the set scene, they should aim to make discriminating comparisons between the film texts as well. Some students may find comparison amongst film versions helps them add detail to their responses, particularly if they have a strong preference for one film version over another.

Detail – AO1 examines students' critical engagement with and response to key details in the texts. Clearly, quotation is important and students should reference precise textual detail and comment on the effect of language. Equally, their comments on the key scene in the film version or versions

they have studied should be detailed, precise and carefully chosen. They should consider the decisions the director has made about characters, how these interpretations are conveyed and whether there seem to be differences in the meanings conveyed from one text to another – this can mean comparing play text with film text, as well as making comparisons between film versions.

Sample answers

Taking some of the candidate-style responses as a starting point, it's possible to identify likely areas that would benefit from attention in the research and preparation stages.

Tense

Students should write about the film text in the present tense, in the same way they write about the play text. The first example below, taken from the sample candidate answers, uses the past tense whilst the second correctly uses the present tense to articulate ideas:

1. In the film version, Macbeth's first reaction to hearing the news <u>was</u> shock. Then he turned his head away.

2. In the film version, Banquo <u>puts</u> his sword back in its sheath before Macbeth, <u>showing</u> that he is not such a violent man as Macbeth.

Performance aspects

Where students interpret particular meaning from an actor's performance, encourage them to identify what aspects of the performance convey this meaning. Consider the candidate sample answer below:

In the film, the actor, Ian McKellen, brought out the way Macbeth is arguing with himself. He is obviously puzzled, feeling that what the witches told him "Cannot be ill".

How might the student have developed this answer to describe the performance techniques – expression, intonation, gesture – employed by McKellen to demonstrate this internal conflict and puzzlement?

Film aspects

In addition to commenting on performance aspects, your students should aim to explore some of the ways in which film conveys meaning. Consider the observation below. In this film version, McKellen frequently addresses the camera directly. The student's comment here reflects performance aspects, using the term 'aside' to describe McKellen's delivery:

Macbeth has a lengthy aside, which again he says directly to the camera.

This is accurate when referring to the play text and stage performance but in film, this technique has a different name and a different effect. A film script might direct an actor to 'look to camera' to deliver a key line, a technique which creates a very direct connection between character and audience. As opposed to the conventional theatrical practice of the aside, characters in film rarely acknowledge the audience directly and an actor looking directly to camera can be disconcerting to viewers. The effect of this technique at this particular moment in the film could therefore be explored in more detail in this answer.

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Interpretation of meaning

The setting and location of a scene can make a useful focus for exploring how meaning is conveyed through film. Generally, the stage directions in play texts will be functional and spare whereas, on film, the possibilities for interpreting setting are very broad. After studying the film versions in the preparatory stages, students should have a good knowledge of these aspects and be able to describe the choices that have been made and the impact of these.

Consider the two examples below:

1.   The film version made Act 1 Scene 3 very dark. Macbeth's first line is "So foul and fair a day I have not seen". This is interesting as the witches said at the end of Act 1 Scene 1 "Fair is foul and foul is fair", so Shakespeare is making some link between the witches and Macbeth.

2.   The RSC film includes mists swirling about and we remember that Macbeth called for darkness in Act 1 Scene 4, linking darkness with evil: "Stars, hide your fires! Let not light see my black and deep desires."

The candidates make purposeful comments on the language of the play, but they miss an opportunity to comment on the deliberate choice of setting – the use of darkness and mist – as an interpretation of the text and a way of conveying meaning. The response below attempts to relate the director's choices to meaning:

Again the scene is very dark. In the film it also looked foggy, perhaps showing Macbeth's doubts about what he is going to do.

How might these students have added more detail to their description of the setting in order to make explicit their understanding of how meaning has been created in the film?

Before your students approach the final assessed piece of writing, it is suggested that they work through an example of the kind of task they will be approaching independently under controlled conditions. The student sheets on the next few pages take a generic example question and unpack it in a way that is designed to be applicable across any set text. Accompanied by whole-class teaching of key points, such as the examples given above, this should provide a good opportunity for your students to develop their response skills.

Also included in this section is the Film Analysis Chart, designed for students to record their responses to the key scenes on film as they view. It is recommended that the sheet is enlarged to A3 size when copying for student use, to ensure that as much detail as possible can be included. Additional sheets should be used if more than one film version is studied.

Analysing the requirements: Film Analysis Chart

Spotting the filmmakers' craft - You should refer to the Film Glossary when working on this activity:

Name of film.......................... Name of Director.....................................Date of production....................

Elements of the filmmakers' craft	How does each element of the filmmakers' craft contribute to showing the thoughts and feelings that characters A and B express?	How does each element of the filmmakers' craft contribute to showing the way other characters react to them?	How does each element of the filmmakers' craft contribute to showing the dramatic effect of the scene?
Camera shots			
Camera angles			
Camera movement			
Sounds			
Locations, sets, costumes, props			
Editing			
Colours			

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Analysing the requirements: Student Activity Sheet 1

Unpacking the Question

For GCSE English Literature, you will be writing about the Shakespeare play you are studying as a controlled assessment task. You will have read the play and watched at least one film version of key scenes. You need to comment on *how meaning is created **by both** the written text and the film text(s).*

Whatever play you are studying, this activity will help you understand exactly what the question is asking and how to go about writing your answer.

The question below does not refer to any particular Shakespeare play. The character names used here are designed to help you understand the requirements of the question, rather than test your knowledge of Shakespeare.

The question

Remind yourself of Act X Scene Y in the text and in one or two performed versions of the play.

Using this scene as a starting point, and referring to Shakespeare's text as a whole, explore how the characters of A and B are portrayed in the performed version(s) you have studied.

You should consider:
* *the thoughts and feelings that A and B express*
* *the way the other characters react to them*
* *the dramatic effect of the scene*

Working towards an answer

The question requires you to explain how the characters are portrayed in the film(s) with reference to the play text. Before you consider this, it is a good idea to think about how film texts and play texts create meaning differently.

(a) Differences between play texts and film texts

Read through the statements on the next page and then sort them into two headings according to the chart. You can use your notes from *Film Language: Student Activity 1* to help you here. You may find some statements fit into more than one heading.

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1. Name of character speaking
2. Use of lighting
3. Play title
4. Choice of costume
5. Stage directions suggest action
6. Lines to be spoken by character
7. Casting of famous actors
8. Recorded music
9. Range of camera shots
10. Act and Scene numbers – used to divide narrative
11. Outdoor and indoor locations
12. Exits and Entrances – describe character movement on and off stage
13. Range of different camera angles
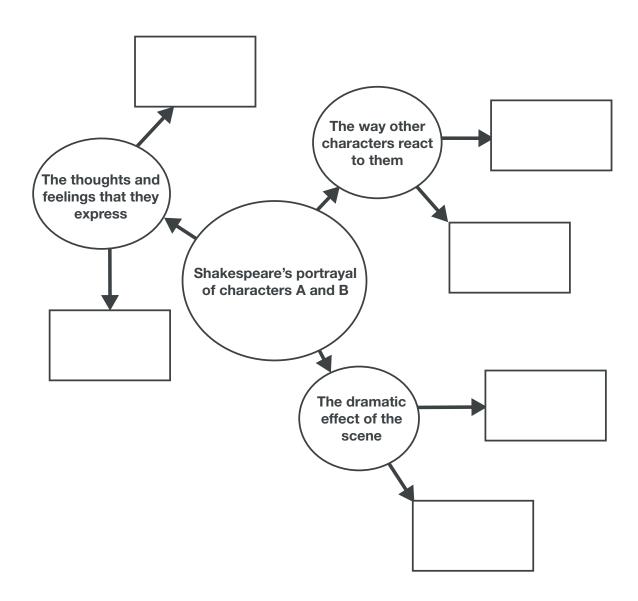14. List of characters in play
15. Voiceover option for prologue/soliloquy

Ways play texts create meaning for readers	Ways film texts create meaning for viewers

When you have completed this, look at the list of ways meaning is created in a film text. - Is there anything you can add?
- What do you think each of these film elements adds to the portrayal of the characters in the play you are studying?

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(b) Character portrayal in the play text

From your reading of the play, you already have a good idea of how Shakespeare has portrayed A and B. With a partner, jot down key points illustrated by the play text in Act X Scene Y about their personality and motivation. Use the diagram below to help you organise your ideas.

The thoughts and feelings that they express

The way other characters react to them

Shakespeare's portrayal of characters A and B

The dramatic effect of the scene

(c) Spotting the filmmakers' craft

You are familiar with Shakespeare's portrayal of A and B. The film version or versions you are working with will offer further layers of meaning to the characters. To answer the question fully, you need to show how the characters are portrayed in the film(s) and how the filmmaker creates this portrayal.

In other words, how does the filmmaker highlight different aspects of the characters and their relationship?

Watch the scene again making notes on the *Film Analysis Chart*. This will help you to identify the different ways in which the filmmaker has created this scene.

(d) Pulling it all together

The challenge with answering this question is pulling together your answers from both the spidergram and the *Film Analysis Chart.*

In other words, you need to comment on the portrayal of the characters as presented in Shakespeare's text (the spidergram) AND how they are portrayed in the film *(Film Analysis Chart)*. There might be similarities and differences.

Points to consider:

- Does the film version emphasise the same aspects of the characters' personality and motivation as the play text? Explain what these characteristics are and how the emphasis is achieved.
- Does the film version introduce or emphasise anything about the characters and their relationships that you had not noticed in the play text? Explain what these are and how they are achieved.
- How does the filmmaker enhance the dramatic effect of the scene?

This activity provides a model structure. Now you need to use the spidergram and *Film Analysis Chart* to help you analyse the key scenes from the play you are studying. The more times you watch the scene on film, the more you will notice about the filmmakers' craft and the better your answer will be.

(e) Enriching your answer

Either as homework or in class, you should try to watch at least one other film version of the scene you are studying. You should use another copy of the *Film Analysis Chart* to make notes about how the characters and the drama are portrayed in this version. You should refer to each version by the name of the director and the date it was produced [e.g. Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* 1968]. Then you can compare the similarities and differences between film productions and the original text. This will make an even more comprehensive and interesting response to the question. The more versions of the scene you watch and analyse, the richer your answer will be.