

Macbeth and Hamlet

Mildred M. Espree

DeBakey High School for Health Professions

Shakespeare is the consummate political thinker. His work teaches us more about the abuses of power: how to take it, keep it, and lose it, than Machiavelli. His dialogues can make Thomas Hobbes' negative views on the depravity of man seem optimistic. Yet unlike these aforementioned writers, the language of Shakespeare is a poetic performance, powerful and instructive to each new generation, his characters relevant in our time. In the halls of Michael E. DeBakey High School for Health Professions, I meet some semblance of Hamlet every day. Their own fathers lost or never known, they angrily yearn to make someone pay what's due. There are also those nephews forsaken by uncles who are more ambitious than kind, who are more interested in their own lofty goals than in being loyal to a brother or sister's son. The Lady Macbeths are harder to discern, but sometimes I glimpse them manipulating their way through life, unconscious perhaps, that their desire to unsex themselves and eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. While their imperatives are not as old as Eve, they are perhaps, as old as some of the Elizabethan "naughty baggage" they echo unwary. And there are would-be kings, like Oedipus, and Macbeth, ready to kill to win. They too roam the halls of my high school, where stealing books is normal and few students would take your money because "that would be unethical." These *killers* intend to cheat, subvert, manipulate, and cavort their way to success, and this is the stuff of drama, of Shakespeare. Like Shakespeare's, their conflicts are very common and most profound.

This unit is designed to help students -- as a result of my lectures, discussion questions, guided reading and viewing of films, and guided writing practice in response to the sonnets -- compare and contrast themes and parallel ideologies, in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, two plays I teach each year to my senior-level Advanced Placement English Literature students. This material is standard fare in high school English coursework and I have some packaged curriculum materials that pertain to these texts, but my goal with this new unit is to find creative ways to further illuminate these critical timeless stories, and help student readers and viewers learn how to handle their own life stories, and perhaps create relevant writing of their own. More and more, media literacy has become a vital part of the Language Arts curriculum; therefore, another goal of this unit is to teach *what is useful* in films on Shakespeare's plays and help students utilize and *interpret* these films as supplements to their written texts.

My questions about *Macbeth* as literature and in film focus on the role superstition and demons/witches really play in the architecture of this tragic character's world and how his perceptions and faith in them force him to pursue power at any price. One always questions how and why the pressures of ambition and the thirst for power, internally and externally, impacts seemingly strong people in different ways.

In *Hamlet*, my questions also center on evil and revenge as pervasive societal problems, the canvas on which human folly plays itself out in the world, which is also stem and petal to which we are all heirs. Everyone has a father or father figure and everyone has a mother, who it is hard to think of as other than perfect, except as we age and realize that she, like ourselves, is subject to all the frailties of the human condition. Our character Hamlet, finds himself "mad" and suicidal, not to mention homicidal, when he discovers that his Uncle Claudius in some strange Oedipal and

biblical Cain-and-Abel twist of fate, has murdered his brother and married his sister-in-law. Echoing Genesis and Sophocles, this Hamlet is haunted by his father who, like many of our fathers, in spirit at least, refuses to die, and our mothers, for their very human transgressions, are like Gertrude and Ophelia, cast out of Eden. The point is obvious; no matter how universal Hamlet is, whether we have survived this passage of our lives or not, we can all remember when we too asked the most important existential question: To be or not to be? Yes, we did that too. As teachers, we must remember ourselves if we are to impact our students. We too felt the blood passion that arises from the desire to succeed at any price. Yes, we do know Macbeth; he is ourselves.

And likewise, so many of our students have stories to share that have to do with familial conflicts, and because often they do not have the opportunity to write creatively about these conflicts, and because so often young writers write more to take revenge on those who have harmed or shattered them early in life, I would hope that a survey of the literature of revenge and its toxic effects on our families would inspire my students to transcend their pain and to realize that they are not alone, neither in their own generation, nor ours, not historically and not in terms of human consciousness. For toxicity, I turn to Macbeth, because so many of my students believe winning is its own “end all and be all,” as did Macbeth. I want them to understand as Sophocles did that it is “better to lose with integrity than win by fraud.” Our secular society does not teach this, and it is through the films and derivatives of films on these two Shakespearean tragedies that I would like to teach these children of our postmodern world some of its most profound lessons.

The films I have viewed for this unit are as follows: Roman Polanski’s *Macbeth*, Kenneth Branagh’s *Hamlet*, and Campbell Scott’s *Hamlet*, which features African American actors, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Roscoe Lee Browne, and Blair Brown, in the roles of Ophelia, Polonius, and Laertes. In addition, I have a postmodern version of Macbeth, with him and his cohorts fashioned as a British motorcycle gang. Clips from these films will be a vital part of each lesson and will be interfused with an analysis of text, a review of the criticism, and a mastery section for students on film terminology.

A NOTE ABOUT THE RESEARCH

After reviewing several researchers through texts and on the Folger Library’s Shakespeare website, I decided to rely heavily on the introductory lectures of British Columbian Professor Ian Johnston because they are already soundly grounded in research and the facts of the texts themselves, and because I thought they would be easily accessible to my students. So I have relied on his basic expertise on *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* to support some of my own assertions about each of these characters. Additionally, I have interwoven my own critiques and insights about the film versions of these two plays.

Part I: Shakespeare as Political Thinker – A Foundation for the Lectures

Teacher’s Notes on Hamlet

Ian Johnston refers to Hamlet as a “hard-headed pragmatic Machiavellian, whose speaking style reflects his desire to use his public language as one more way to achieve certain very specific goals” (Johnston on *Richard II and Hamlet*, 1). He says Hamlet uses language as a means to manipulate people and that he is a compulsive talker who uses language to protect himself from prematurely killing his step-father: “They would much rather talk about the world and about themselves in a ceaseless verbal reflection than address the world with a sense of commitment to action based on an understanding shared with others. Both of them live in a highly charged political world and have clear responsibilities for action within it. They both demonstrate an incapacity for an intelligent discharge of those responsibilities, because they would sooner comment on the world, reflect on their own situation, and place the people around them in a

rhetorically constructed image of their own making rather than listen carefully, assess intelligently, and act on the basis of some understanding established through dialogue” (Johnston 2). This is an excellent point to make about Hamlet, although Johnston is also referring to Richard II. He understands that Claudius is an accomplished ‘Machiavel,’ and that he has the support of Polonius in his decisions about the country and in his marriage to Gertrude. Claudius is a shrewd political operator who, unlike Hamlet, is able to listen very carefully to others and use language to facilitate action and not merely reflect it (Johnston 2). In typical Machiavellian style, Claudius says what needs to be said in order to get his own way; this is something Hamlet is unable to do and thus his vulnerability.

We sympathize with Hamlet because we sense that he is a sincere young man. He understands guile, but he cannot engage in it except through rhetoric, and then it is a game he plays with himself, a game which renders him impotent, until, in his final act of desperation, he resorts to violence, which we may be tempted to believe, based on Shakespeare’s plot, is the nobler, yet unerringly tragic, outcome. Nonetheless, it raises questions, the most obvious one being whether Hamlet might have saved himself had he not rationalized his situation, but had instead allowed himself to feel his own pain and to react spontaneously to his father’s murder and not succumb to the taunts of the ghost. Interestingly, Shakespeare provides for us a classic profile of a man who lacks emotional intelligence, a culture captivated by the supernatural, and a political climate, which like most, is predetermined by those without conscience and with the most guile. In short, Machiavels. This is a perennial form of evil and one we are allowed to explore vicariously and discover, as Hamlet does much to his own surprise, that “one may smile and smile and be the villain.” This is the point. He has discerned the evil behind men’s smiles and it has made him mad. Hamlet, while a sympathetic tragic hero, is as much a villain in his vindictiveness as Claudius is in Cain-like murderous contemptibility. That we hate Claudius more and only superficially understand Hamlet’s flaws is a great tribute to Shakespeare’s wit. It requires something of an excavation to truly understand the inherent evil in succumbing to treachery, in fighting evil with more evil, and in taking revenge against a gross injustice, and in attempting to right a great moral insult – the alleged murder of a father, an action for which the only witness appears to be his ghost.

But Hamlet cannot take action. He only talks a good game. Ian Johnston states that “it is because... [Hamlet’s] language is so intriguing we may tend to miss the extent to which [his] verbalizing may lock him into an immature emotional stance from which there is no escape. [He] is impervious to any criticism about his ways of using language (although Hamlet criticizes himself, he is incapable of dealing with the issue), and hence ultimately fails to act effectively” (Johnston on *Richard II and Hamlet*, 7). This point notwithstanding, we know that Hamlet will kill Polonius impulsively, kill Laertes unintentionally, and cause the suicide of Ophelia when all he really wants to do is to usurp Claudius toward whom he feels completely impotent until he is pushed toward a revenge he has only spoken of until it becomes inevitable that he act. Such malaise, the inability to act, is in itself, an alarmingly modern evil, which oftentimes creates ponderous, yet thoughtless action that culminates in truly regrettable behavior. Johnston further explains that Hamlet’s personality is such that he “creates a linguistic barrier between himself and the realities they face because language is their reality” (7). For characters (people) like Hamlet, because language is their reality, they must deal with a world impatient with “their morbid generalizations about the unsatisfactory nature of all experience” (7).

As an instructor of young people, I find it particularly important to reach them on this point alone. So many of them pity themselves, and their place, or lack of status, of money, of influence and of opportunities in the world. Like Hamlet, they have been wronged in some way and possess a desire to right what they see as the insidious nature of the evil in the world. It is not my place as a teacher to suggest that they should not desire to correct the world because that is why children

are born – to recreate reality, to make it new again, and again. And yet, unlike Hamlet, they must be guided so that they know that to war against such evil is to fall victim to it oneself. Yet one cannot help wonder whether Hamlet, characterized as a Christian, would have been better equipped to war against evil had he been a pagan. John Alvis makes a strong argument in favor of this. Citing Machiavelli, Alvis notes that Christianity “elevates the life of passivity, humility and contemplation of otherworldly rewards over the life of spirited activity, politics, and honor-seeking in this world” (Alvis and West 290). He emphasizes that Christianity does not encourage men to perform deeds of strength. Alvis indicates that Shakespeare’s Hamlet is an argument in favor of a Machiavellian remedy that would ensure that European people would fight against despotic rulers, prevent malefactors from grasping power, and revive Roman notions of manliness, something Hamlet, only after great deliberation, is able to do. While many literary critics have suggested that Shakespeare is an adversary of Machiavelli, Alvis does in fact, in both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, focus on the same malady that Machiavelli perceived was afflicting Christendom (Alvis and West 290). Like Johnston, the focus for Alvis is in Hamlet’s ineffectuality and irresponsibility because he fails to take action immediately against his father’s murderer King Claudius. Alvis cites Martin Luther, whose academic stronghold was Wittenburg where Hamlet studied, who as a proponent of St. Paul “depreciated human effort and the flesh, who like Hamlet, discussed the struggle of spirit against body” (Alvis and West 303). So for Alvis at least, part of Hamlet’s problem is his faith, his extreme asceticism, his nihilism and his medieval belief in the truth that the body is at war with the soul, (Platonic duality), which is basically what the language of this play is concerned with. So my treatment of the nature of evil in *Hamlet* will focus on Hamlet’s character and how it has been developed by directors like Branagh.

This examination of setting, mise-en-scene, tone, language, and imagery are contained in the lecture and lesson plan portion of this unit. It is important to note that it may not be possible to come to a consensus on the philosophy of Hamlet since Shakespeare did not leave a book of notes on how the lines of verse should be read. For example, is Polonius' tone scathing or loving as he warns Laertes about integrity? Written in 1600, no other text except the bible has had so much debate about how we are supposed to understand it. There are volumes of literary criticism on it and I humbly propose to defer to the best of them. What is new here, I hope, is a refreshing way to teach something old, yet decidedly new, just like the evil within the text itself. But first, we will turn to evil in the character of Macbeth.

Teacher's Notes on Macbeth

Easier to understand than the character of Hamlet is that of another would be king who kills a king, Macbeth. Macbeth, one could argue, would be a modern-day green beret, or a Crime Scene Investigator par non before he meets the witches on that fair and foul, paradoxical day. He already knows how to kill. In the opening scene, we are led to understand that Macbeth is a great warrior thane who has already fatefully impaled a traitor’s head upon a pole.

Not much of a talker at all compared to Hamlet, he has no trouble acting on his plans, but the nature of his evil is perhaps in his impetuosity, his ambition and his malleability. This is not, like Hamlet, a revenge play. We all understand revenge deep down and that is perhaps why Hamlet is a more sympathetic character than is Macbeth; however, both of them are controlled by the supernatural, and in the case of Macbeth, it is the supernatural to which he succumbs first. The three witches have more influence on Macbeth in moving him to action (perhaps the 4th witch is his wife) than Hamlet’s own father’s ghost did in moving him to action. Now we have already noted that Hamlet is perhaps a solipsistic chatterer. Macbeth, on the other hand, is diabolical in his madness. Prompted by his wife, and fully knowing better, that is, he has a conscience, he decides to kill in order to become king and kills again to ensure his position. As he says himself, “Were this the end all and be all here...” In other words, he knew before he killed that it would

not end with the death of Duncan. He goes on to systematically assign his thugs to kill his friend Banquo and his son, Fleance, “who would beget kings,” (Shakespeare’s nod to King James, who is said to have had an ancestor named Banquo).

The riddles of the witches and Macbeth’s faith in them are themselves problematic. For my students, I wish to have them analyze just how often we place our faith in signs, in the stars, in things that are both serendipitous and coincidental, yet still mean only what we want them to mean. I will argue that Macbeth is a more sympathetic character precisely because he has been a soldier in the king’s army and thereby subject to post-traumatic stress syndrome and the failings (evil if you would) of a war-like culture. The atmosphere in Roman Polanski’s *Macbeth* as well as certain post-modern versions of the play is hauntingly similar to George Orwell’s futuristic *1984*. In both fictions, war is peace. In scenes so bloody and macabre they reek of Edgar Allan Poe, we find Shakespeare writing a horror story about something old in our cultures on earth – the evil supernatural, the devil in all its manifestations. Called phantasmagoric, the various scenes enacted of this play’s murderous plot, suggest a realm of good sense and sanity that is minute and barely sheltered, surrounded as it is by a foggy, darkness that appears pervasive. One can be asleep most of the time and still note this pollution in the world. Many modern critics assert that the evil in *Macbeth* is macrocosmic – it really is what our world is like, and they also assert that for this reason alone, it is Shakespeare’s darkest play.

Any viewing of prime time television certainly corroborates this notion, whether one is watching the various fictions or the alleged news of the moment. And in this play, Lady Macbeth asks the gods (or the night) to unsex her and transform her into an evil spirit that she might do the deed unconscionably. Any film treatment of these plays that fails to treat these anomalies in their characters as flaws and direct consequences of their actions, or which do not lend themselves to the characters’ disintegration, do in my opinion, fail to make a powerful point.

One must understand the nature of the evil itself in Macbeth, as a part of his own willfulness, to adequately portray him as he is meant to be played. After all, he starts out as a well-respected nobleman who by the end of the play has witnessed his own betrayal at the hands of something evil. It’s ironic that an evil man would trust something which he perceives is as evil as he is; therefore, one must question what Shakespeare is telling us. “No man born of women will kill you and you will not die until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane.” (Macbeth paraphrased).

So Macbeth is crazy. Well, evil actions are by their nature insane, and it would be good, if our society succeeds in so doing, to just drug all the evil doers into compliance. But my question for students is whether or not it is oversimplification to always treat evil as insanity. Is there some other force at work here? What does Macbeth’s disintegration have to teach us? I think that one could make a strong case for responsibility here. In the end, he is his own undoing. While it is Hamlet who poses all the existential questions, it is truly Macbeth who teaches us that ultimately our own free choices are our undoing or our grace. It would be easy, according to Johnston, to turn this work into a morality play and simply say that Macbeth’s undoing was his ambition. Too much ambition is sinful we say. And the play itself makes a case for ambition. Citing Polanski’s treatment of the murder of Duncan, Johnston stated that Macbeth finds himself in the room with the dagger in his hand and is no longer able to resist all of his own self recriminations and doubts about his actions because he has embraced evil in his own imagination. It helps that Polanski’s Duncan awakens just before he is killed, and Macbeth, who is now incriminated, feels he can no longer turn away from this murder. The subsequent murders make for a difficult case against superstition because the witches are then a response to a corresponding desire to do evil that already resides within him.

Shakespeare is telling us again and again that we cannot become bedfellows with evil thoughts and come away unscathed: “By taking pleasure in imaginatively killing Duncan and

letting that vision lead him into Duncan's bed chamber, he creates a situation where he has to carry out the murder without having actually decided once and for all to do so. His imagination has committed him to evil before his conscious mind realizes that the decision has been made" (Johnston on *Macbeth*, 5). Macbeth is internally divided. Is he bipolar or schizophrenic? I think an argument could be made for mental illness, but that is only two steps away from saying we are all deranged, and morality and evil are double edges of an arguably toxic human condition. But is it true? For my students, who aim to become future health professionals, this is an approach most likely to help them unpack themes in the play on a more profound level. Macbeth is filled with regret as his world deteriorates. He knew better and chose evil anyway. Johnston asserts that of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, Macbeth is the least admirable. I concur. In our time, he would be Charles Manson or Jeffery Daumer, just another mass murderer, except for his cultivated conscience. Perhaps Richard III qualifies as the world's number one, non-fiction killer, but one is often baffled that someone with the clearly evolved conscience that Macbeth professes that he is still an unconscionable killer. Again, Richard III also qualifies under these criteria, but his killing to preserve or regain a kingship is seemingly more justifiable than Macbeth's, superficially at least.

We can easily believe that Lady Macbeth has lost her mind in the second half of the play, but not Macbeth, who continues as he began to carry out his evil schemes until his own doom. I think it is important that students recall again that Macbeth is commended in the beginning for splitting someone from the chin to the navel. Perhaps the nature of killing is such that reasons do not matter once it has become a lifestyle. I believe the once Macbeth killed for the king, it was not such a far cry for him to kill the king, and then to kill *as a king* himself. Many a soldier has returned home from war and been unable to compartmentalize killing. This is one thing Macbeth cannot do. He is an intelligent man and he expects consequences for the killing of Duncan and moves to counteract them. His problem is that he is already a killer. Johnston says that this does not make Macbeth likeable, but it does give his circumstances a heroic quality. "He simply will not compromise with the world, and he will pay whatever price that decision exacts from him, even though as his murderous career continues, he becomes increasingly aware of what it is costing him...for no sooner has he become king than he becomes overwhelmed by fear, nameless psychological terrors which will not leave him alone" (Johnson on *Macbeth*, 6). Macbeth's evil actions make him terrified of his inner self, and according to Johnston, he stands up to that fear, but his attempts to resolve the inner pain are futile because of what he has done.

What has he done? Macbeth cannot live out his life as normal people do. He ridicules outcast witches and their allusions to Hecate to justify his own willfulness. He tries to change the script, to alter his reality to suit himself, as he is not subject to those things we all learn to accept. Students often react to this by resisting the idea that we have to live the life we are given, and are often very bitter. It seems that this is most true sometimes among those who are most astute and who are prone to envision their own possibilities as limitless; such notions as class, race, fortune and power are to be transcended, and therein lies the profound contradiction: these just might be overcome, just *might* be transcendental in some other-worldly sense, but most often, like our human aging and dying, these are what they are, ours to keep. So for my young people, who are often naïve because they have not lived enough to have experienced these truths, it is important to raise the question of necessary authenticity as an essential key to emotional health.

After viewing sections of Polanski's *Macbeth* and the postmodern *Macbeth*, lessons and lectures will center on this question of Macbeth's character because it seems to me that certain questions just will not go away about this man. He is someone, who like Richard Cory, already had everything, and yet he self-destructs. Our society has seen its share of greats do likewise, and yet children still deify the morally and ethically challenged among us; therefore, one has to question the nature of our toxic society, past and present, as we unravel Macbeth. Macbeth in

words that resonate as a metaphors for the entire play gives us his final truths – that once he has manipulate endlessly to force life itself to fit his self-made script, in the end, he has rendered his own life meaningless. Here we get a most profound statement of existential angst – without any moral code and in the absence of any higher moral authority; he knows that like the rest of us, he must succumb to his own self-made fate:

I have lived long enough. My way of life
Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have, but in their stead
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath
Which the poor heart would fain deny and dare not. (5.3.23-29) Also quoted in Johnston.

And later, when he finds out his wife is dead, he is both crazed and calm, saying little that makes sense and yet his words are horrifyingly sensible in their metaphorical impact:

She should have died hereafter.
There would have been a time for such a word.
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle.
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (5.5.16-27) Also quoted in Johnston.

We know that our lives do signify something. We believe we are different from Macbeth who realizes in the end, just before he is to die, that no mortal is equipped to take control of his life and totally ignore other people, or the entire social mores of his or her culture. Killing is prohibited by civil, societal, and moral laws throughout human cultures, and yet, we are voyeurs, and we watch it on film and screen, and wonder at the inane farce our lives have become, without realizing that like Macbeth, we are now living in our ever imaginary hell on earth. This is, in my opinion the nature of the toxic society. We fail to teach morality, our religion has become ambition, materialism, and secular achievement; and we reduce murder to a relativistic philosophical notion if we think about it at all, and otherwise treat it as good entertainment. Perhaps, we, like the Romans, and the Macbeths of the world, will learn the hard way. We learn and we learn again, and in the end, like Horatio, we who teach are, if we are lucky, left to tell the tale.

Superstition in Macbeth and Hamlet

Briefly, the presence of the ghost in Hamlet and the witches in Macbeth can be viewed as conventions. They represent what is already present in the subconscious of these two tragic heroes, if we can truly call them that. Much of what I mean can be explained by the term signify, which comes from the word sign, which means to be a sign of, to imply or mean. A sign in language is a symbol that represents something else. I believe both the ghost in Hamlet and the witches in Macbeth are outward representations of internal ideas, beliefs, motives and desires. In Hamlet, we find a young man in mourning who longs to see his father again. It is very convenient to have this father appear as a spirit to request vengeance for his death. Clearly Hamlet had reason to believe his father was murdered. Any young man would suspect an uncle who usurped his

throne and married his mother. Who would not want his rightful inheritance? After all, “much madness is divinest sense,” and we believe Hamlet has reason for his incessant chattering, anxiety and grief, but the ghost is not a causal factor. Rather, it is a detractor, a prop, meant for entertainment as Shakespeare guides us through more profound questions about a world where uncles kill fathers and manipulate women old and young to do their bidding, where good friends spy on one another, and men reared as brothers attempt to kill each other. Superstition itself is not the causal factor here. It too is a sign of our caustic, fatalistic and bloodily violent world.

In *Macbeth*, the witches do not force Macbeth’s hand. How could they? He is very much his own man. Macbeth is intelligent and very aware of his actions. Some have argued that he is insane. Others blame his ambition, but I believe that the witches are what witches have always been, manifestations of our fear and faith in women to affect outcomes in our lives. After all, Macbeth believed in his woman so much he did her bidding even when he knew better. Such a man, who came from noble birth, who had a good marriage already, despite the couple’s shortcomings, would have found it easy to rely on the prophecies of the witches, the devil’s daughters. Indeed, he was enthralled by them in a way that Banquo was not, which raises the question of why Banquo did not respond the same way that Macbeth did to the witches’ predictions. The obvious answer is that he had no cause. But given the opportunity, would Shakespeare’s Banquo have been loyal to Macbeth, or would he have chosen to follow McDuff and Duncan’s sons who fled? We never know because Macbeth has him killed before he makes his choice, but we have reason to believe that something noble in Banquo’s character was readily apparent: he would, after all, sire kings.

Shakespeare in the Movies

(Much of what I have recorded here are generally “Notes for the Teacher,” because much of what the critics review was not clear to me until I studied their comments after viewing the films and then watching them a second time).

Part A – Hamlet

In examining movies about Hamlet, I found three that are particularly useful. The first one is the 1969 film by Tony Richardson, whose Hamlet is an angry young man in a film which Rothwell describes as claustrophobic because of the gloomy depiction of Elsinore and notes that this film broke with the elocutionary style of Sir John Gielgud (Rothwell 136). Rothwell states that Richardson’s movie “reifies Sir Phillip Sidney’s definition in *The Defense of Poesie* 1595 of mimesis as “representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth – to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture” (137). Rothwell says this because the movie takes many different portraits using small and medium shots that it makes a montage of “talking heads.” The Rothwell text also indicates that Richardson’s *Hamlet*, with its dark ambiance, portrayed the character as lit by an inner fire. This certainly contradicts the criticism of the texts of the play in some ways, but shows exactly how an actor like Nicol Williamson can interpret and reinterpret the text, making the words become live and offer up “a psychological study in close-ups that seem to burst the confines of frames, nearly spilling out into oblivion” (Rothwell quoting Gianetti 137). What is contradictory here is that Williamson’s Hamlet is so decisive, as opposed to the existentially paralyzed typical Hamlet, that this is definitely an ‘auteur’ style in which the director has reinterpreted the play itself. Rothwell consistently contrasts these characterizations to Lawrence Olivier’s interpretations and notes that Richardson’s mise-en-scene remains sparse and shadowy in contrast to the elaborate unit sets of the Olivier production. He notes, as I did not when I saw the film, that the “editing moves backward and forward between the contestant and the queen, in the fight scene between Laertes and Hamlet, whose own demise brings with the dying recognition, anagnorisis, that “the King’s to blame” (139). Clearly, the second film is the older Olivier film which students really like because of the costuming and setting, the visual design or mise-en-

scene. My students tend to be mostly from second language and minority backgrounds (Asian, Hispanic, African and African-American); they are most fascinated by the Olivier version because they do not fully understand the historical period or culture of these stories. They like the atmosphere created by the design and find these stories easier to follow and more familiar as their first exposure to the historical plays. They can only appreciate the more sophisticated productions after they have studied the play for a while.

My plan is to show each of these films to my students and have them write a comparative essay on the plays, the format of which will be in the lesson plan section of this unit. The final version of *Hamlet* is the postmodern Scott Campbell version of the film which features the racially diverse cast and another interpretation of Hamlet as both haunted by the ghost of his father and his own demons. This final production appears designed for students and is formatted so that they may read Shakespeare on the screen as they see the play. Mentioned earlier, this racially diverse cast appears designed for an American audience. The main criticism of Branagh's *Hamlet* is that his is a famous actors' movie and it is lavish. Both comments are correct, but as a selling point for a young audience, I have to argue that these are good things that make his film more relevant to students who recognize actors they relate to in this film despite it being criticized as a "movie star parade." My favorite scene is of Ophelia face down and eyes open in the water. I appreciate the fact that in movies I can obtain a visual representation of scenes to which a stage play can only allude. I enjoy imagining these things, but the main attraction of an artistic interpretation is to discover the directors' and actors' vision and creativity in addition to the language of the play. My 21st century students especially enjoy this kind of activity. A final look at *Hamlet* and an opportunity for comparative essay writing will consist of the Ethan Hawke corporate viewing which will be included in the lesson plans.

Part B – Macbeth

Roman Polanski's film version of *Macbeth* is surreal. I noted immediately the otherworldliness of the witches, the weird sisters who were rendered even stranger by their nakedness and ugliness, one of them sans eye, and another even older than the first and extremely haggard, the two of them offset by the seeming normalcy of the third. Women, who like inhabitants of earth, yet not quite from here, moved Macbeth to evil. He had to have known what we, the audience, know, but the dramatic irony is that he can believe what his own senses know is false. Polanski's Banquo exudes goodness and we believe him when he says, "[often], to win us to our harm, the instruments of darkness tell us truths..." and we even believe Macbeth who warns us if not himself that the "present fears are less than horrible imaginings," and all this before the killing of Duncan. Macbeth ponders that chance would have him king and these imaginings are clear in Polanski's vision as he has Macbeth begin to undo himself even before he entertains the thought of murdering Duncan.

With his dynamic mise-en-scene, Polanski provides for us a stark contrast to the battlefield as he gives us an unnerving and peculiar peacefulness and wholesomeness in the first shots of Macbeth's home. The music accommodates us and makes us wonder whether this Lady Macbeth really will be evil until she tells Macbeth to "look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it. Leave all the rest to me." Here Polanski's actress defines herself, as we realize that other than challenging his manliness and urging him toward murder, this "Lady" will *do* little herself, yet still bloody her hands. Macbeth's dual nature is made clear as he ponders the consequences knowing full well that he cannot "o'er leap the life to come." Later after he has killed and killed again we meet the witches a second time, and now Polanski gives us a tribe of them instead of a trio, and when Macbeth drinks their "liquor" and stares into the cauldron, he sees himself talking back with words he did not say, and we realize that it is his subconscious mind and not some external evil that is leading him to believe he is invincible. Here Polanski is brilliant, and I believe he goes beyond Shakespeare in interpreting the play as this postmodern "film noir,"

which clearly renders Macbeth psychotic. The declination from Macbeth's initial humanity to an almost demon-like entity that does not care about anything except living out his fate is in direct contrast to Lady Macbeth's becoming all the more human as she fails "to out the damn spot," and ascends in her humanity through her suicide. The final ironic twist in the Polanski film has Donalbain on horseback riding into the rocky den of Hecate following his brother's and McDuff's killing of Macbeth. Polanski leaves us to ponder whether this cycle of blind thirst for power will continue, and we already know the answer. It will; however, one warning about this film, stop it and fast forward through the ravaging of Lady MacDuff and her children because it is inappropriate for classroom viewing.

My *Macbeth* motorcycle gang version was ordered through Filmic Archives, a company no longer in business, but this film may also be obtained through Teacher's Video Company. When I initially showed this film, I promised students *Macbeth* and they did not like this version. It actually works better with a seasoned audience who has read the play and studied a bit about film. As an initial introduction to the play, it falls short, but it is fun to watch and to analyze once students have a firm grip on the issues and themes in the play, yet truth be told, that may take longer than what one teacher can expose students to in the few weeks allotted to teaching the plays.

THE LESSON PLANS -- SHAKESPEARE IN OUR TIME

Motivational Tools

Shakespeare in American Communities, in partnership with the Sallie Mae Fund and Arts Midwest has created a free of charge package for teachers from the National Endowment for the Arts. It consists of brochures, a VHS film entitled *Why Read Shakespeare* and DVD documentary on *Shakespeare in America*. Reviewing these materials should take approximately two class periods to complete and will be combined with other activities designed to enrich students before they begin reading. Of particular use are the many examples of powerful English and memorable quotes from all of Shakespeare's plays that are printed in words as they are acted. We are told that Shakespeare was the George Lucas or Stephen Spielberg of his time and that Shakespeare bound "our heritage as Americans and speakers of English." Because he was especially tuned in to what it meant to be male and female and because his women characters are as smart as the men, Shakespeare becomes cutting edge in our time (Shakespeare in American Communities. The DVD, *Why Shakespeare*, a documentary by Lawrence Bridges, suggests that his material is relevant for its value in reaching young people, many of whom act as spokespersons and who explain how Shakespeare helps them to grow emotionally and understand better exactly what they are experiencing in their life journeys. The package also comes with a useful audio designed especially for teachers: *Teaching Shakespeare*. "Shakespeare makes you appreciate language like no one else. His words in rhymed iambic pentameter reflect the heartbeat of his characters" (*Why Shakespeare*). The VHS comes with commentary from both Dr. Gail Kern, director of the Folger Library and Dana Gioia of the National Endowment for the Arts, who explain the important impact Shakespeare has had on his life, art, and the role it plays in education.

Building Background for Shakespeare

Day 1: Activity # 1: British Literature seniors will read, review and discuss excerpts from Stephen Greenblatt's recent work *Will in the World*, to examine what is and is not accurate in his rendering of the story of Shakespeare's life. Students will have studied Shakespeare since 9th grade and will know the basic information about his life. During this lesson, we will discuss how to evaluate sources and place Greenblatt, his credentials and his assertions, under scrutiny for its usefulness and contribution to the field of Shakespeare studies. By touching on the highlights of his life and interesting anecdotal information about it, I hope to revive students' interest in this author.

Day 1: Activity # 2: Before reading and studying *Hamlet*, students will examine Shakespeare's life, the story of his son Hamnet, his daughters, and his wife Anne Hathaway. Students will review the NEA materials and view the films in the package to help rekindle their interest and give them a sense of the breadth and scope of this author's words and work. The film documentary shows everyone from Tom Cruise, William Shatner, and Michael York to real world students reciting passages from Shakespeare or discussing their interaction with his texts and explaining how these have changed their lives.

The History Lessons (two 90-minute class periods)

Objectives

Students will listen to a lecture about Renaissance History and the Life and Times of William Shakespeare. This topic will cover the Middle Ages, the history of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I as they relate to Shakespeare, Shakespeare's early years, his marriage to Anne Hathaway at age 19, The Lost Years, The Dark Lady, Hamnet, and The Globe Theatre. This kind of material is best presented as a power point presentation where students are asked to practice their note-taking skills. An interesting mnemonic device, copying notes helps students remember facts they would not otherwise recall. This material is also useful for assessment purposes as a quiz grade since it can be measured. While they are memorizing facts about Shakespeare's life, I will introduce a sonnet-a-day during April, which is National Poetry Month, to help students fine-tune their reading and analytical skills with small doses of Shakespeare before they actual begin reading the plays and viewing the films. I will also include here interesting examples of Shakespeare's use of the invective, for which he remains the master of all time.

Shakespearean Timeline

From the National Endowment for the Arts, I have received a new timeline that chronicles Shakespeare's life and times. This is a very helpful teaching tool that will complement the power point presentation. Information about ordering Shakespeare in American Communities free of charge is included in the bibliography under films. The first assignment of the unit will be for students to learn film terminology and the different types of film criticism. Handouts at the end of this unit provide a list of terms which students may define and utilize as a reference tool and for the multiple choice test they will take after we have viewed and taken notes on the first round of films. This will come after a close reading of the plays and a study of the background materials.

Teaching Timeline:

This unit is designed so that the materials and project can be completed in approximately six weeks.

Studying Hamlet on Film and in Print - The Lessons

Reading about Notions of Justice vs. Notions of Evil - The Key Objectives

Before reading *Hamlet*, students will examine how history is related to motives for revenge in *Hamlet*. I will read them an excerpt from the Charles and Mary Lamb book, *Tales from Shakespeare* to help them understand the basics of the plot long before we tackle the language. I will point out that we humans hardly ever exact revenge for no reason unless we have some kind of pathological mental illness. In the case of Hamlet, the problem is Claudius. Most of us empathize with Hamlet. But Claudius' guilt is difficult to discern. I will point out later that his motives are more closely aligned with Macbeth's than with Hamlet's. For a minimum of two class periods, students will read aloud and take notes on the introductory materials in the Folger Shakespeare Library edition of *Hamlet*, which goes in to great detail in providing useful and compact tools for reading the language of Shakespeare, his life, and the theatre as well as

providing sufficient background on this text. After each act in the play or powerful scene, I will ask students these key questions:

1. What does it say?
2. What does it mean?
3. Why does it matter?

Students will study *Hamlet* according to these themes and will keep their own dialectical journals and notes as they read. I will also ask them to raise new questions and check for understanding as we read and discuss various passages simultaneously exploring how the scene would be plotted out for staging.

Writing and Project Objectives

Following our discussion of history in *Hamlet*, students will write a short essay in class about a time in their lives when they wanted revenge for something that was done to them or their parents or perhaps a more ancient grudge. Students will examine notions of generational and intergenerational guilt and whether or not the biblical notion of the sins of the fathers passing to their sons is a valid way to approach the problem of revenge. Hamlet, we believe, sought justice. Naturally, we will define terms and I will argue for a macrocosmic examination in brief as students learn that has been a preoccupation since the beginning of time, and at least since Socrates and Job. We will also examine the history of Fortinbras' father who lost the throne to Hamlet's father, both of whom are dead. Students will note that ultimately Fortinbras does nothing but request that lands taken from his father be returned, yet Hamlet, as he is propelled along his self-destructive path, earns it back for him by killing others and being killed by poison placed on Laertes' sword by Claudius.

Activity One: Day 1: Library Visit

Students will note that Claudius, Gertrude, the deceased King Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, all characters in *Hamlet*, are each caught in the middle of sins -- in a virtual hell on earth. Claudius kills for two reasons: his lust for Gertrude and his lust for the monarchy. Shakespeare's preoccupation with the monarchy and with tyrannicide will be a report topic as students go to the library to find their own information about the history of Denmark and its connection to Shakespeare.

Defining Terms: Students will complete mini-research papers on entailment, Scandinavian mythology, and primogeniture in British society. These will be presented to the class as group projects and will be graded on presentation, content accuracy and clarity, and writing skill.

Activity # 2: Days 2-5

Students will read the play in class and for homework. I strongly urge my seniors to purchase their own copies of the texts so that they can take notes on the page. I have a classroom set of the Folger Library edition of *Hamlet* for in-class use; however, this text, unlike *Macbeth*, is not printed in our current state adopted textbook, *The Language of Literature*.

Activity # 3: Days 6-10

The Differentiated Curriculum

-- ***Actor's Workshop with Storyboarding, Web Mastering, and Illustrations.***

- A. After reading the play in class, students will perform a scene from *Hamlet*. As in Shakespeare's day, we will keep the scenery simple, but we will use props and costumes. Students will receive guidelines for this assignment ahead of time. I suggest giving them these materials at the beginning of the unit so they may plan ahead of time and organize

their troupes. Props might include a chalice, a throne and a book for both symbolism and atmosphere.

- B. Students will use illustrated *storyboards to plot the scene they intend to perform*. This will give them added practice with viewing and representing, which is one of our State of Texas curriculum objectives for English Language Arts.
- C. Web mastering. By senior year, many students have taken a class in adding graphics, dialogue and music to their web presentations so I want to give those who may not be performers an opportunity to also do something creative that is related to our study of *Hamlet*. They will be given the option to reinterpret or rewrite a scene and present it as their own self-enhanced Videos.
- D. Illustrations. Over the years I have collected wonderful artistic renderings of Shakespeare's tragic heroes Hamlet and Macbeth from student artists. I want to make sure that those students who like to illustrate characters are given the opportunity for such creative expression. This lends itself to cross-curricular teaching and learning as students use some of the skills they have learned in art class to create their own interpretations and impressions of "direst cruelty" in the faces of these tragic heroes and heroines. They will produce book covers, paintings, postcards, brochures, and possibly, web pictures for inclusion in their emails.

Evaluation and Assessment

In order to design the proper assessment tools for the types of activities I have designed and my particular students at DeBakey High School for Health Professions, I propose to ask myself the following questions which should help me assess students on this and on each of the activities which follow.

The Overarching Question for the Teacher

What overarching questions will serve to guide instruction in this unit and push my students to higher levels of thinking? What specific questions will guide this teaching and help students to engage in what is at the heart of the Big Idea or topic? Where is my evidence that students have performed or have products which demonstrate their learning? (Getting Results with Curriculum Mapping 43).

The Answer

Students will be assessed both traditionally, with multiple choice tests to ensure they have mastered knowledge level material, with essay questions, which is just a good practice for helping them to synthesize new learning and raise new questions. Students will also be evaluated on the overall quality of their products and performances, each of which will be criterion-referenced using teacher-designed rubrics.

Visual Literacy

Reading the Movie like a Book.

Students will watch both Scott Campbell's and the Ethan Hawke's *Hamlet* before we begin reading *Macbeth*. In the Ethan Hawke version of *Hamlet*, this character's impotence is manifested as he is dwarfed by the materialism, opulence, and sophistication of the urban landscape that is New York City. Hawke is Hamlet for his generation. Portraying him as an alienated rich boy/man who wears a ski cap among the sleek, well-heeled corporate clothing of his would-be peers, the director interprets this Hamlet as more like a sixties generation follower of Che Guevara or Malcolm X. This setting is urban chic: long black stretch limousines, tall post-modern buildings, a taken-for-granted affluence among Claudius and his cohorts as this usurped young heir to the corporate throne is seen watching himself watching his life as though

he is a character in a play. This is so very fitting as Sam Shepard, the writer of this interpretation, casts himself as the murdered ghost and father/king. Denmark has its own logo here and is a corporation. It is believable here as much as anything seen inside an electronic box can be made believable. Against the backdrop of the city, we see Shakespeare's Hamlet unravel as a man besieged by the greed and violence around, hardly new ideas. What makes the film seem so surreal is the medium itself. Television. These characters look like us, sound like us, and we sense their thoughts in the context of our current world: reality is what's in the digitally enhanced box. Yet reality is that such a box is in our classroom showing the film, and we watch and believe, but the true obscenity and clarity of a bloody murder is nothing we witness on a daily basis with the detachment witnessed in these characters that are no more real to us than a fictionalized story. We know the stories. We believe in them. Denmark is corporate America. In the end, the new king is Fortinbras, whose ascension is reported by the news, anticlimactic and just the way Shakespeare intended it to be. This film will be used as guided practice to help students understand setting, color, light and camera angles. Campbell Scott's *Hamlet* will be used to show students how authors from diverse backgrounds have interpreted their roles. We will compare and contrast differences in setting between these two films.

Reading Macbeth, The Mass Murderer

Objectives: After reading and performing *Hamlet*, I want students to engage in more sophisticated analysis as we read and study the language in *Macbeth*. My goal is for them to know the texts really well before we move to the movies and film adaptations of the text. I believe that the message of Shakespeare is that language counts, and beautiful language counts even more; therefore, I will begin to integrate film studies and comparative analysis of film into this unit *only as culminating lessons and activities after we have read Macbeth*.

The History Lesson:

Activity # 1: Days 12-16: Search and Discovery

Library Visit. Following a lecture about Macbeth and a general overview of Shakespeare and his motives for writing it, students will research Scottish history to learn about the real figures on whom characters like Macbeth, Duncan and Banquo were based. Students will write a short report explaining their findings. The best papers will be read and displayed in class.

Activity #2: Days 17-19: Quote Collecting and Memorization

As they read each act, students will collect their favorite quotes from the text. They will type the quote in nice font and illustrate their text. Included at the end of each quote will be parenthetical documentation using MLA format. This guided practice activity will help students remember notable lines from Macbeth and also help them learn proper documentation skills, which will be needed on their final research reports. This will be advance preparation for longer memorization activities. Memorization and interpretive reading allows students to really learn their characters with a degree of intimacy that dedicated professionals have with theirs.

Activity # 3: Days 20-24: Research Life in London

Students will research background materials related to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and evaluate the appropriateness and credibility of their print and electronic sources. One possibility is that students could create a special edition magazine called *Life in London*. In it they can include maps, illustrations and articles about different aspects of London life. They could divide their magazines into sections that would cover politics, religion, science, health, hygiene and upper class life. Project job titles would include editor, writer, illustrator and researcher I recommend assigning specific articles to each of the teams. After they have created this author study project, they can turn the printed version of *Life in London* into a video news magazine. Each group

member would then become and an expert on the show. Students could also design a web page on life in London. (*The Language of Literature*, 422).

Activity # 4: Days 25-30

Students will read a sample research report on The Gunpowder plot, since Shakespeare was very aware of the political implications of this attempted murder of King James I by Guy Fawkes in an attempt to restore Catholicism to England. This activity can be found in the Writing Workshop section following the text of *Macbeth* in *The Language of Literature*. Following their reading of this report, the entire play in class and for homework, and the presentation of their Life in London project, students will begin their student of comparative analysis and film terminology.

Activity # 5: Comparative Analysis: Days 31-36

This kind of writing cannot be completed until students are knowledgeable about the movies and the characters being analyzed. It might be useful to differentiate this assignment by having certain students write a film review, others write a film analysis, while the comparative analyses are reserved for the strongest and most enthusiastic aficionados. Basically, for the comparative analysis, the writer would find similarities and differences about two to four things, make some statements about them and back up these assertions with textual evidence from primary sources in the bulk of the paper. Such a paper will submit a thesis and develop it in depth. Titles are descriptive, fully functional descriptive and lengthy because this is designed for a learning audience like students of film studies. This kind of paper systematically announces its thesis, subject matter and what points will be compared and developed. Students will be told not to write a plot summary. Such work is for their notes.

In a critique or comparative analysis, director's styles can be compared. Benchmark works from the oeuvre of an established star can be contrasted, making points about his growth. Also ripe for comparative analysis would be cinematic techniques and special effects quickly becoming obsolete because of computer driven imaging. Why particular genres have flourished is also a topic for the comparative analysis. Each of these approaches is outlined in detail by Moscovitz in *Critical Approaches to Writing about Film*. Of special interest for developing this activity and walking students through the various writing structures would be the chapter specifically devoted to this type of writing on pages 125 through 148. Moscovitz also has chapters on writing a documented research about films as well as writing movie reviews. Below are several useful ideas for topics on *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* films gleaned from this text (Moscovitz 136-197).

1. Student might compare two actors playing the same or similar roles in separate films.
2. Two directors styles
3. Similar themes in separate films by the same director
4. Write a comparative analysis or a critique of any two films seen in class on *Macbeth* and/or *Hamlet*.
5. A Director's Styles Template. (Teachers can design and adapt this from several versions available on the Folger Shakespeare Library website)

The final appendix of the Moscovitz text also contains quizzes, multiple choice questions, essays, and research projects. The fill in the blank definitions is a review of Chapter 2 *Preparation for the Process of Film Criticism and Glossary of Cinematic Terms*. I plan to use this material to test students over the items they have studied in class Moscovitz explains the reasons why critical research papers and critiques are assigned. They are valuable assessment tools and provide tangible proof of critical reading and/or critical viewing. They must be more than mere summary, and are designed so that students will explain why and how something occurred and whether the presentation of such material works for the viewer. A critical perspective and the development of

higher level thinking skills is a major goal of this unit and of most college level courses. Moscowitz avers that “excellent motion pictures have been produced; such fine work should be identified and assessed” (2). He also says that like everything else that is creative, movies run the gamut from inferior to exceptional and that a discerning critic will learn to evaluate film in the same way we critically review the music we hear, the clothes we wear or the food we eat.

Activity 5: Days 37-40: Rules for Watching a Film in Class

Taken from Moscowitz, these are some of the most useful guidelines I have encountered in my reading for teaching students about typical aspects of film. My students have to simultaneously learn rhetorical and literary analysis. I think I would be doing them a great service by also helping them to learn how to interpret, analyze and enjoy one of their favorite pastimes – watching movies. Students will be given the following notes in a handout form.

Handout #1 Preliminary Guidelines for Writing about Film

(From Moscowitz’s *Critical Approaches to Writing about Film* 8-9).

1. Review the movie’s title and significance
2. Pay attention to the format of the opening credits. Note whether there is static background behind them or whether action is transpiring and what effect this creates.
3. Pay attention to the film’s opening scenes and make notes on how these affect setting, tone, theme, atmosphere or mood, and characterization.
4. Check to see whether or not references are made to other films. Also pay attention to the allusions in the dialogue.
5. Also look for patterns indicative of the director’s style.
6. Examine the lighting, music, sounds, special effects, camera shots like panning, costuming and set design on the film.
7. Note strengths or weaknesses in casting.
8. Note lapses or breaks in continuity.
9. As will all narrative forms, pay attention to plot. Note whether it is tightly woven, sloppy and/or complex. Students will complete a paragraph checklist.
10. Pay attention to the effectiveness and validity of the final scene and ending shot.
11. If your goal is to write a critical paper, it helps to view the film several times, noting parallels as they unfold.
12. Also note the relationships and interplay of characters and how they relate to each other and the plot.
13. See the video again within twenty-four hours. Rewind, pause and freeze frame to make sure you quote accurately.
14. Read, integrate, and document additional source material – reviews and critical pieces – with your notes and insights as you compose your first draft.
15. Proofread, edit and write your final draft on your word processor.

Cinematic Vocabulary

Several times during the course of this unit, students will be testing over terminology. The list below is only a partial list because it will most certainly grow as students read, study and develop skills in film criticism.

Handout # 2 Cinematic Terms for Student Writers

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. angle | 15. genre | 29. set |
| 2. auteur | 16. mise-en-scene | 30. shooting script |
| 3. backlighting | 17. montage | 31. shot |
| 4. blocking | 18. motif | 32. sound effects |
| 5. close-up shot | 19. narrative | 33. special effects |
| 6. composition | 20. New Wave | 34. star |
| 7. crane shot | 21. pan shot | 35. star system |
| 8. cut | 22. period piece | 36. star vehicle |
| 9. deep-focus shot | 23. point of view | 37. symbol |
| 10. dissolve | 24. prop | 38. tilt shot |
| 11. editing | 25. reaction plot | 39. tracking shot |
| 12. fade | 26. scenarist scene | 40. voice-over |
| 13. film noir | 27. score | 41. zoom shot |
| 14. frame | 28. sequence | |

Final Notes – A Nod to Film Criticism

The Moscowitz text is useful for different types of film criticism and theory, and is complementary in an advanced course on literary criticism. It makes for a good culminating project at the end of the year after students have learned to critically read texts and to understand of how to read a film. If time allows, I may utilize this resource to design an interdisciplinary final project for my Advanced Placement Literature students.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works Cited

- Alvis, John E. and Thomas G. West, eds., *Shakespeare as Political Thinker*. ISI Books, Wilmington, Delaware, 2000.
This is a unique collection of essays that I have used off and on for several years now precisely because of what they have to say about Shakespeare as a political thinker as well a poet and dramatist. I have found no other sources which treat this topic as well. Alvis' chapter on Hamlet and Machiavelli poses the question as to whether Hamlet approaches his revenge, his murder of Claudius, in a politically responsible manner. Alvis argues that he does not and goes on to explain why not. He uses Machiavelli, Shakespeare's thoughts on tyrannicide and Christianity to explore this topic of the killing of kings. Alvis' also argues for the predominance of supernatural forces and beliefs as a factor in the tragedy of Macbeth saying that "his character was not his fate." I question this, but find it an intriguing possibility. Finally, I decided that Macbeth's existential choice to change his life through murderous action and intent, his own willfulness, really did determine his fate.
- Applebee, Arthur N., et al., ed. *The Language of Literature*. Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell, 2000.
The section entitled "Choices and Challenges" describes several culmination activities for students after a study of *Macbeth*.
- Burke, Jim. *Illuminating Texts*. New Hampshire: Heinemann: Reed Elsevier Inc., 2001.
I particularly enjoyed Chapter I, p. 7 on The Role of the Teacher. It posed the question of where am I to sit if students turn to me from a screen, a monitor, an image...a I along with my peers sit in the desk overwhelmed by a combination of awe and confusion when I see what we can do, when I think about where our society is heading...as we move along the continuum of complexity that forces us all to learn to read again and again. His answers to this question more than justify my reasons for wanting to know more about Shakespeare and Film in the context of my students' needs at DeBakey HSHP, students who are ethnically diverse, literate, but who sometimes have tremendous gaps in their learning because of their cultural uniqueness. Also valuable for my exploration of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* on and off the screen, Burke's Chapter 7, p. 139 which focuses on Visual Literacy, addresses the need for us to read images well as we read the words. Paraphrasing Shakespeare, Burke says "the entire world is a text and we are merely readers of it." Burke's own web site is www.englishcompanion.com. Burke offers several web site sources in Chapter 7 of particular interest to teachers: www.growingupdigital.com, www.nestexit.com and The Center for Digital Storytelling at www.storycenter.org.

- Hoffman, Donald. "Visual Intelligence." *How We Create What We See*. New York: W.W. Norton. 1999.
I'm sure no one else but Shakespeare himself, who is so clearly ahead of his time, would understand the necessity of sight itself as symbol system. Hoffman says what we see depends on what our visual intelligence constructs. This suggests a subjectivity we cannot escape and is an amazing defense of community and collective efforts to construct and defend common ground and our connectedness through both the texts and films we read and discuss.
- Jacobs, Heidi Hayes, ed. *Getting Results with Curriculum Mapping*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2004.
- Johnston, Ian. "An Introductory Lecture on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*." *English 366: Studies in Shakespeare*. Malaspina University College, Nanaimo, BC. <<http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/eng366/lectures/hamlet.htm>>.
A lecture prepared for English 366 on *Hamlet*. Public domain and may be used free of charge and without permission.
- . "The Issue of Language: Introduction to *Richard II* and *Hamlet*." *English 366: Studies in Shakespeare*. Malaspina-University College, Nanaimo, BC. This text is public domain, released July 1999. Revised August 22, 1999. <<http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/eng366/lectures/richard2.htm>>.
A lecture prepared for English 366 on *Richard II* and *Hamlet*. Public domain and may be used free of charge and without permission.
- . "Introduction to *Macbeth*." *English 366: Studies in Shakespeare*. Malaspina-University College. Nanaimo, BC. This text is public domain, released July 1999. Revised June 2001. <<http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/eng366/lectures/macbeth.htm>>.
A lecture prepared for English 366 on *Macbeth*. Public domain and may be used free of charge and without permission.
- Moscowitz, John E. *Critical Approaches to Writing about Film*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999.
This text is useful for different types of film criticism and theory and is complementary in an advanced course on literary criticism.
- Rothwell, Kenneth S. *A History of Shakespeare on Screen: A Century of Film and Television*, 2nd edition, Cambridge University Press, 2004.
Of particular interest are the selections on "Shakespeare in the Age of Angst," "In the Cinema of Transgression" and the current "Renaissance of Shakespeare in the Movies."

Teaching and Research Sources

- Bazin, Andre. *What is Cinema?* 2 vols, ed and trans. Hugh Gray. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971.
I want a working definition to use with students and I think Bazin's approach, although very traditional, might be a useful place to start.
- Bordwell, David. *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.
It would be almost impossible for me to write this curriculum unit and justify it at my particular school without making the requisite connections to rhetorical analysis and also justifying why I am using particular films. I want to teach this Unit at the appropriate level for my students and this text is exactly what I need to do that.
- Bordwell, David and Noel Carroll, ed. *Post Theory and Reconstructing Film Studies*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.
It goes without saying that it is impossible not to talk about post-modernism in the 21st century in film in particular. I suspect it may help me understand some of the more recent films that have been done on *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.
- Carson, Diane, Linda Dittner, and Janice Welsch, eds. *Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
It is possible to find support for the well-worn theories on Lady Macbeth, but it might be useful to examine our vision of her in relationship to her time (she was also a Shrew, but Shakespeare treated her differently from Katharina in *The Taming of the Shrew*), and I suspect the differences have to do with politics. I'm not sure if this resource will prove the best for what I have in mind, but it just seems like a good place to start.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004.

Haskell, Molly. *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1974.

Again, it is impossible to remove Lady Macbeth from the tragedy of her husband. Did Shakespeare in reproducing this historical piece treat her fairly and have we? My only answer is that not all his women were maligned. Again, this is a text that will inform me as an educator and may have a few gems useful to my students.

Kaplan, Ann E. *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

This text is useful because, I have to know about Shakespeare as psychologist.

Yes, and again yes! I want supporting evidence for ideas I have about Shakespeare's characters, as well as the approach I use in teaching both the texts and the films.

Mast, Gerald, Marshall Cohen and Leo Baudy, eds. *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 4th ed. Oxford University Press, 1998.

Highly readable selections here may be reproduced with permission for academic purposes.

Films for In Class Use

Bridges, Lawrence. *Why Shakespeare? From Shakespeare in Our Time*. An Interactive DVD which guides us through stories of people—actors and students from all walks of life whose worlds have been positively changed by their experiences with Shakespeare, this is for me part of a found treasure of teaching tools from an excellent resource. The brochure that comes with this package is called *Fun with Shakespeare* and it contains a puzzle activity, famous quotes and a list of words attributed to Shakespeare. There is also a Teacher's Guide book, which contains numerous lesson plans on the social structure of Elizabethan England.

Scott, Campbell. *Hamlet*. Hallmark Entertainment's Spare Room Production, 2003.

Made for high school students, this film has a multicultural cast that my ethnically diverse students will appreciate. It will also serve as enrichment since many of them do not realize that there are more and more Shakespearean actors who are minority.

Hawke, Ethan. *Hamlet*. Miramax Films. 2000.

In this rendition, Denmark is a corporation and Hamlet wears a ski cap in contrast to the powerful men who represent the Machiavellis of this post-modern adaptation. There is excellent cinematography here as the 16mm camera takes shots of powerful people, an embedded media, and stretch-limousines. The cap makes Hamlet appear young and suffering from depression and acedia, a spiritual malaise. This is a tasteful, fun film that is suitable for the classroom and which lends itself well to guided practice in film criticism.

Polanski, Roman. *Macbeth*. Columbia TriStar Home Video. 1971.

I loved this film! It is fun and frightening, especially the witches. Students will enjoy it as well, but be warned. There are nude scene you may want to edit out for in class viewing or just fast forward through them. The second scene in which the weird sisters appear contains nudity as does the domestic scene that is marring by the ravaging of hostile MacDuff.

Shakespeare in London. Ironhill Pictures. Goldhill Home Media International Thousand Oaks, California, 1999.

This film takes viewers to the Museum of London, which Dr. Cunningham says is one of the best places to get a feel for London on the web.

Shakespeare in Our Time. National Endowment for the Arts. 2004.

Introduced by David Gaioa, Director of NEA, this 25 minute film was a very useful resource, which I also cited in the text of this unit. It is part of a most relevant package that comes free of charge to teachers. It is part of a national program, which makes a strong case for relevance of Shakespeare to all peoples in all times. Order this program online at <<http://www.vpw.com>>.

Teaching Shakespeare, a compact disc with various monologues for Shakespeare's plays. Produced by the National Endowment for the Arts as a part of the Shakespeare in American Communities program. The audio program for teachers features such notable figures as Jane Alexander, Harold Bloom, Michael York, Mel Gibson and Chieu Xuan. The audio accompanies the Teacher's Guide which contains complementary lesson plans.

Wood, Michael, *History of Shakespeare*, PBS 2000.

More than any other films, this two-volume set has the wealth of the original documents. He goes inside British museums and to Lancaster in Northern England.