

ENGLISH: *HAMLET*

Module B Thesis and Notes

Essay question to relate to:

'Shakespeare's Hamlet continues to engage audiences through its dramatic treatment of issues that lie at the core of human experience.'

Thesis:

Shakespeare's Hamlet has retained its textual integrity due to directors' continual portrayal of the issues relating to the human condition and society in a relevant and universally applicable manner.

Our changing perceptions of the important values within changing contexts consequently result in Hamlet's enduring value.

Key Term:

Textual dynamics: relationship and engagement of the text with the responder: integrate into the introduction – Textual Integrity

Things to Include:

Mention the following ideas and how they are shaped according to context in terms of different critical/ directorial approaches.

1. Avenger/ avenged:
Need to remain sympathetic with the avenger: Elizabethan theatre conventions/ context and how this is a convention of revenge tragedy
2. Structure of the play:
 - Nunnery scene:

Different interpretations of the event/ characters reactions according to different critical and directorial approaches to the play:

E.g.: Kenneth Branagh – existing sexual relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia
 - Play within a play:

Metatheatrical: textual dynamics – engagement of the audience. You are showing them instead of telling.
1. Individual interpretations of characters – Appearance vs. reality:
 - Hamlet:
 - Acting: is he mad or does he put on madness
 - Claudius:
 - Acting: acting for the good of his nation or for selfish purposes?

2. Mortality and the notion of existence:

- Suicide, murder, afterlife:
 - “Too too sullied flesh” soliloquy
 - Refers to State of Denmark
 - Kenneth Branagh’s directorial approach
- “To be or not to be” soliloquy
 - Existentialist principals

3. Hamlet’s characterisation:

- Maynard Mack – Hamlet is a reflection of those around him
- Parallel between Fortinbras, Laertes and Hamlet: all lost fathers and trying to act honourably in a corrupt world
 - The importance of portraying characters in accordance to context:
 - I.e.: Fortinbras is not included in Zeffereilli’s adaptation