

English 200: Reading (and Rereading) *Hamlet*

Hamlet Scene Staging Essay

Length and Due Date

Length: 1,250 words, formatted as described in the “Essays” portion of the syllabus

Due: Friday, August 6, by 10:00 p.m. via Collect It

Assignment

For this essay, you will stage a scene from *Hamlet*, making an argument about how your staging communicates a specific interpretation of the scene. Some staging and direction details to consider for your essay include:

- Setting (interior or exterior; public or private; large or intimate; modern, Renaissance, or medieval furnished or sparse; single or multiple level; etc.)
- Props (items actors will manipulate in the scene)
- Lighting (bright or shadowed; white or tinged with color; from a particular source like a window or candles, etc.)
- Costumes and makeup
- Acting and figure movement (characters’ appearance, tone of voice, and physical movements)
- Figure placement (characters’ physical placement on the stage)
- Dialogue (lines you would exclude or add)

Guidelines

- 1) Although I have defined your task, you will need to develop an argument and emphasize a limited set of staging details. In a four-page paper, you cannot discuss all the staging aspects listed above. Instead, you will need to focus on the elements that most effectively underscore your interpretation of the scene.
- 2) To structure your essay, consider beginning with an argument about how the scene functions. What does it do for plot or character development? What themes does it establish or explore? After establishing your interpretation, describe the staging elements you will discuss. In each body paragraph, concentrate on one staging element, explaining how it communicates your interpretation of the scene. How will your staging cue the audience toward a particular reading of the play?
- 3) Remember that you are writing to an audience who has read *Hamlet*. Therefore, you do not need to summarize the plot in your essay.
- 4) Because you’re submitting your essay in electronic format, you have the opportunity to incorporate photographs or scanned drawings. However, you must discuss the image within the body of your essay. Identify the visual details that illustrate distinct elements of your staging. When using photographs or drawings, caption each image (for example, “Figure 1: Gertrude's costume”) and reference the figure number in your text (for example, “Gertrude's costuming in the closet scene underscores her sexuality (see Figure 1)”).
- 5) When writing about literature, use the present tense (for example, “Hamlet murders Polonius” or “Ophelia claims that Hamlet loves her”).

- 6) If you're having difficulty devising an approach to the essay, or if you want to discuss ideas-in-progress, come to my office hours or email me to set up an appointment.

Grading

I will use the attached scale to grade the scene staging essay. Late essays will receive a 10-point deduction per day late, including weekends and holidays. I will make exceptions to the lateness policy only in cases of documented illness or family emergency.