

FWU – Schule und Unterricht

DVD 46 10605 / VHS 42 10605 2 x 21 min, Farbe



Shakespeare Shorts

Macbeth

The Witches' Power

Macbeth

Der Hexen Macht

BBC ACTIVE

FWU –
das Medieninstitut
der Länder



Lernziele – nach Lehrplänen und Schulbüchern

Der Einsatz der DVD erfolgt in der SII im Kontext mit den jeweiligen Richtlinien der Länder. „Macbeth“ ist darüber hinaus verpflichtend im Bereich der Zentralabiturthemen für den Leistungskurs Englisch verschiedener Länder. Im Grundkursbereich mehrerer Länder wird ein taster course Shakespeare empfohlen, sodass die Besprechung dieser ausgewählten Szenen exemplarisch erfolgen kann. Der Schüler soll dabei

- die Problematik der zeitgemäßen Aufführung der Szenen erfassen und durch Vergleich mit den älteren Produktionen die hier vorliegende moderne Version in ihrer Einzigartigkeit würdigen,
- Verständnis für die unterschiedlichen Probleme und Verhaltensweisen der einzelnen Personen in dieser Situation erwerben,
- die Aufnahmetechniken am Beispiel ausgewählter Einstellungen beschreiben und ihre Bedeutung für die Gesamtaussage erfassen und würdigen.

Vorkenntnisse

Da die Szenen 1 und 3, Akt I im Mittelpunkt der Betrachtungen stehen, bietet der Film eine hervorragende Motivation zum Einstieg in das Stück. Vorkenntnisse sind für die Schüler im GK Bereich (taster course) nicht erforderlich. Jedoch sollte Shakespeares Text der beiden Szenen bekannt sein (Wortschatz, Inhalt), um die Filmaufnahmen würdigen zu können. Im GK Bereich bietet es sich an, das Thema von reality and appearance am Beispiel einer weiteren Szene aufzuzeigen (z.B. in Akt II, Szene 1, „dagger scene“) oder das Thema von ambition for power auszuweiten, z.B. auf Lady Macbeth (Act I, Scene 5) und Unterschiede zwischen ihr und Macbeth herauszuarbeiten.

Hier können die jeweiligen Monologe von Macbeth bzw. Lady Macbeth im Mittelpunkt der Betrachtung stehen.

Im LK Bereich sollten die Schüler jedoch zunächst einmal durch eine textanalytische Erschließung des ganzen Theaterstücks mit Shakespeares Welt vertraut gemacht werden. Danach sollten andere Formen der Erschließung, wie z.B. dieser Inszenierungsvergleich zu einer vertieften Erkenntnis hinsichtlich unterschiedlicher Auffassungen führen. Diese contemporary version der beiden Szenen wirft auf die Themen von reality and appearance sowie ambition for power in besonderer Weise ein neues Licht. Die Schüler können aufgrund ihrer Vorkenntnisse nun weitere Szenen benennen, die diesbezüglich von Interesse sind und selber Vorschläge für eine Inszenierung entwickeln (Handlungsorientierung).

Zum Inhalt

Im ersten Teil entwickelt eine junge Schauspielerin ihre Auffassung der Hexen durch Inszenierungsvergleiche (BBC 1983, Thames TV 1979, Comicversion BBC 1992, Polanski 1971, Zulu Macbeth BBC 1972, Orson Welles 1948, Macbeth on the Estate BBC 1997) und in einer Theaterprobe. Sie reflektiert dann, wie die Hexen durch mächtigen Doppelsinn „fair is foul and foul is fair“ Macbeth zur Beute machen: „Knowing their man, knowing how to tempt him with his own desires“, wieder entwickelt durch Inszenierungsvergleiche und in einer Theaterprobe. Im zweiten Teil des Films wird Akt I, Szenen 1 und 3 von der jungen Theatertruppe in einer rasanten modernen Inszenierung gespielt.

Zur Verwendung

Lessons should focus on three subjects: the moderator in her function to help students win insight into the matter, the wit-

ches, the setting and Macbeth as the major protagonist.

In the course of 4 to 6 lessons, the subsequent subjects I, II and III should be dealt with individually first, before the complexity of the situation can be unveiled in IV, which is the passage on Macbeth himself.

I The moderator

The role of the moderator is of importance, as she tries to develop an understanding for the question why the witches' role had to change in the course of time. According to her statements, it is a matter of authenticity, as the perception of witches has changed since Shakespearean days.

Nevertheless, the moderator herself assumes a mystical appearance by means of a crystal ball, which she uses to look back at former film versions. Additionally, a mobile with a star is hanging from the ceiling, contributing to this mystical atmosphere.

According to the moderator, the old film versions from the 1960ties, 70ties and 80ties seem to hang on to the more traditional interpretation, presenting the characters as expressions of their time. The moderator does not appreciate all these old versions. She makes fun of some of them, but she is fascinated by others. The latest film version of Act I, Scenes 1 and 3, though, confronts us with a surprisingly contemporary interpretation, which shows the audience that the underlying theme of Shakespeare's play is eternal.

By comparing, linking and commenting on the individual film versions, the moderator helps the students to gradually get involved in the play, and finally appreciate each version in its own right.

It is not by chance that the moderator is one of the actresses in this new version.

Amita Dhiri, the moderator, plays the role of the first witch in the latest BBC production. Thus the topic of *reality and appearance* in Shakespeare's "Macbeth" is touched right from the beginning, though in a different context (Worksheet 4).

II The witches

1. In the old film versions

The witches of the old film versions have something in common. All of them are portrayed as "old hags hanging out on the heath" (moderator's comment). They are portrayed as medieval stereotypes with boiling cauldrons, with spells and potions. All of them are outcasts of society, living on the heath, far away from civilisation. Their outward appearance underlines their social position as outcasts. They are dressed in ragged, tattered clothes, the colour of which is dark, thus giving a sinister impression (Worksheet 2, Task 1).

This impression is emphasized, as they seem to merge with their surroundings. Despite its natural beauty, the heath of the Scottish Highlands seems to be barren and repellent and often concealed by mist and rain in these old versions. Thus it is difficult to realize the truth about the objects you see in the landscape. In this context, the statement "Fair is foul and foul is fair," that predominantly refers to the actions of the protagonists, can also be applied to the landscape. The heath has turned into a landscape creating anxiety and fear, uneasiness and insecurity in human beings (Worksheet 1, Task 1).

At the beginning of Scene 1 (BBC 1983), the witches are part of nature, emerging from anorganic rock and becoming living creatures through metamorphosis. They seem to grow out of the rocks. Their merging with

nature is represented by the camouflage colours of their ragged clothes, making them first appear as heaps of mud or rock (Worksheet 2, Task 1).

The *full-shot* shows the entire bodies of the witches as part of the environment. Additionally the impact of the *full-shot* is augmented by the *camera movement*. The *low-angle shot* (camera angle from below) gives the onlooker an inferior position, which is even strengthened when the camera tilts up. Thus the *full-shot*, the *camera angle* and *movement* bring out the 'classical' approach to these Shakespearean witches. They are real beings for Shakespeare's contemporaries, endowed with strong characters. And they must be reckoned with, feared and avoided, if possible. They are threatening and menacing in their search for human prey (Macbeth). The rocks in this version actually symbolize strength, power and superiority in women. It comes as a surprise that the director and the audience of the 1980ties version still seemed to cling to these medieval stereotypes of the witches (Worksheet 2, Task 1).

The gender of the witches is of relevance, too. They are female. Their old age has robbed them of their good looks and sex appeal. Their faces are full of wrinkles, reflecting their life experience, as shown in the *close-up* of a witch in Worksheet 2 (the Polanski version of 1971). There is no insecurity in their demeanour. On the contrary, their faces and body language express their will to take an active part in events, despite their remoteness in location (on the heath and in society). All the witches portrayed in the 60ties, 70ties and 80ties versions are old, except for one in Polanski's production of 1971. This witch is shown as a young woman with blonde long hair,

who even lifts her skirt to Macbeth in order to display her gender and sexuality, trying to entice him before she disappears into her cavelike dwelling (Worksheet 2, Task 2). The beauty by which these female beings might have lured men astray has faded, but now the witches lure Macbeth by means of different strategies. They want to exert their power on him and test their influence on human beings. This is why they manipulate Macbeth by their prophecies. On knowing his character well, both his assets and weaknesses, they manage to direct him. They put a thought into his mind ("You will be King hereafter"), which he cannot resist. This thought is the ultimate seed from which all his future problems root (Worksheet 2, Task 3).

From the perspective of Shakespeare's contemporaries the witches had insight into human character, as they were endowed with supernatural powers. Probably this perspective was also enjoyed by the mid-twentieth century audience. According to this perspective, Macbeth's downfall was due to the witches' intervention. They used him as a plaything to amuse themselves and practise their witchcraft.

One of the old versions (Orson Welles 1948) underlines this perception of the witches. They are carefully stirring mud or clay in a cauldron, which they eventually mold into the form of a human being. Their power to create life is visible here, and it is exclusively the power of females. The feeling of their power strengthens the audience's perception of the witches. They have become real entities, endowed with supernatural abilities that have an impact on the life of man. The function of the witches is to become instruments of temptation that lead human beings astray - away from the

path of honour and loyalty to the path of egotism and treason (Worksheet 2, Task 2).

2. In the current BBC version

a. The modern witches' appearance

All of them wear black leather trousers which serve as a kind of uniform here, uniting them as a group of sisters bound together by a common theme (their interest in leading Macbeth astray). Their fancy-dress tops, for example their purple or pink silken jackets, vary. But all of them show signs of extravagance and interest in the latest fashion, thus making them contemporary. Their dresses, richly decorated with jewelry of various kind, show strong characters not afraid of criticism (Worksheet 3, Task 2).

Additionally their outward appearance is made outstanding by the tatoos they wear on their cheeks.

Although the tatoos are individual, they connect the three sisters, making the three of them unique. They seem to form a gang with a common denominator (the tattoo). Thus they look like members of a sect that recognize each other by markings. The tatoos contribute to their outstanding appearance (Worksheet 4, Task 3).

In the rehearsal, the actresses' approach to the character of the witches is discussed. The actresses try to find ways to convey their strength and unity. They connect hands and arms in a strength pose, forming a circle which shows a strong bond between the three (Worksheet 3, Task 1). This mystical circle is also mirrored in the car park scene, when they encircle Macbeth on rollerblades, thus making him follow their intentions (Act 1. Scene 3 "...the charm's wound up.").

In this contemporary version the witches

are portrayed as young strong women, being part of the community, as opposed to the witches' remoteness in Shakespeare's play text and in the old film versions. But despite their modern appearance, they still remain mystical in the new film version because of the use of special visual aids: the props.

b. The props

- Tarot cards

The Tarot cards are used today when people seek comfort in difficult situations and don't want to apply to the regular resources, i.e. counselling by doctors. These people often show an inclination to believe in the power of the message conveyed by the Tarot cards.

The Tarot cards are often used at a decisive point in a person's life. The person that reads them may pretend that some fate is imminent for the onlooker, thus possibly diminishing the onlooker's active part in the events and empowering the person reading the cards.

On seeing the King card, Macbeth's demeanour changes. A minute ago, he listened to the witches' words in an astonished and perplexed way. But when he picks up the King card from the floor, he seems to dwell on the card, pondering on its validity and its power to make an influence on his life. Despite discarding the card at the end of the scene, his mind has been enveloped with the idea the card represents. Banquo's warning is still on his mind, but not in his heart. Thus the witches have trapped Macbeth.

One rehearsal of the modern version is linked to this scene with the Tarot King card. The function of this rehearsal is to define what is going on in Macbeth's mind.

The director asks the actor one simple question: "At what moment did they get you?" The actor's reply clearly reveals that the point of acknowledging the witches' influence is when they stated that he would be King.

According to the actor, this is the moment from which the action develops into a different direction: Up to now, Macbeth has been represented as the nobleman who is loyal to his King.

But the witches' intervention starts a reversal of character, bringing out the evil side in Macbeth and suppressing his good nature. His ambition to become King outrules all the other positive character traits in him. This is why he picks up the Tarot King card that one of the witches has dropped for him. The Tarot card as the bait is an expression of the fact that Macbeth has been caught and is under their power.

From a modern psychological standpoint, the witches may be regarded as personifications of Macbeth's evil side or his flaws in character. The *close-up* of the Tarot King card underlines the relevance of this prop (Worksheet 4, Task 1).

- Rollerblades

The question is how to present the supernatural power of the witches in a modern-day setting.

The rollerblades are not mystical at first sight, as they are linked with sports and leisure activities. But at second sight they help to transform these three modern women into beings that are not part of our normal environment by enabling them to move quickly and in erratic courses, unforeseeable by Macbeth and Banquo. They are skating around in a hypnotic fashion, attracting Macbeth's and Banquo's undivided attention. Absorbing Macbeth's inte-

rest goes hand in hand with their influencing of Macbeth's mind in the intended direction (Worksheet 3, Task 3).

- Mobile

One mobile is dangling from the ceiling, presenting two moons and two suns. They are another sort of mystical device, hinting at the role of astrology in the matter. Astrology is used here in the same manner as in the Tarot cards. It is used to predict future events, of which the human beings seem to have no control (Worksheet 4, Task 2).

- Masks

The witches on rollerblades wear white masks, thus concealing their identities from Macbeth. This contributes to the mystical atmosphere, too. It may also be looked upon as a reference to the theme of *reality and appearance* (Worksheet 4, Task 4).

III. The setting

1. The heath of the Scottish Highlands

Shakespeare's plot is set in the Scottish Highlands and starts with a scene on the heath. The heath as a landscape is barren and hostile to human beings because of its rough climate and sparse vegetation. This gives the audience the feeling of a remote location, distanced from the community. It bears natural risks that are unforeseeable by those who are used to living in an urban environment. The mist that hangs over the heath conceals the clear shape of the terrain (nature), which finds it parallel in what the witches say. Their words similarly hide the real truth from Macbeth's eyes and mind. The mist contributes to the sinister and unreal atmosphere which sets the scene for the witches.

Macbeth's words "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" distinctly express what the landscape stands for (Worksheet 1, Task 1).

2. The underground car park

The question for the modern production is how to create an environment of remoteness and fear in a modern-day setting. The underground car park meets with these requirements for different reasons. The car parks often have several storeys, some of which are underground, with hundreds of car spots, which may perplex the user because of the uniformity of their outward appearance. They are cold and dark, similar to the heath. Grey concrete has substituted dark rock. The environment of a car park is bland and bleak, and the user can easily get disoriented and confused, when looking for his car. This feeling of confusion and disorientation parallels the feeling of being lost in the heath, when nature is blurred by mist and rain.

Moreover, empty car parks convey feelings of danger and fear to the user, as criminal activities often take place in this environment, as shown in many contemporary films. It is not by chance that extra parking spaces are reserved for women in lighted areas near by entrances or exits, as crime on women in car parks has risen recently. It is amazing that this modern-day environment has the same effect on modern spectators as did the heath on the audience of past times (16th century up to the 1960ties and 1970ties) (Worksheet 1, Task 1).

3. A Birmingham estate

Another modern Macbeth version is set on a Birmingham estate (1997). The uniformity of local authority housing equals the uniformity of the parking lots in the most recent BBC version, with a similar effect. Local authority housing does not allow for individuality, thus creating an urban atmosphere of equal barrenness as the landscape of the heath. Here, the individual seems

to be lost, too. The mist over the heath finds its parallel in the smoke from the burning car, which is an expression of social conflict and violence. As local authority housing is often located on the urban fringe, separate from middle-class or upper middle-class neighbourhoods, the quality of remoteness is similarly inherent. This urban landscape of fear is an excellent setting for a modern Macbeth version, which transfers authenticity to a contemporary audience (Worksheet 1, Task 1).

4. Other landscapes of fear

The photo from a small town in Syria/Golan Heights shows the destruction caused by war (Worksheet 1, Task 2). This urban landscape may stir similar emotions as described in the above passages.

IV. Macbeth, the protagonist

1. In the old film versions

In the old film versions of the 1960ties to 1980ties, Macbeth is presented as the medieval hero, either dressed in medieval battle wear or in clothes appropriate for the time (16th century). His clothes are a combination of a wide cloak, a linen shirt and chain-mail hood. Having his dagger at his side, Macbeth represents the medieval warrior of the time. When looking at the old versions, a modern audience reacts in a different way than the audience did in the past. Macbeth seems to have lost his authenticity, as we may have lost the link to those days.

2. In the recent BBC film version

In order to restore Macbeth's authenticity, the director presents him as a commander that has just returned from the Gulf War, wearing a camouflage uniform and a typically Arabian scarf. Both are known to the

audience, as camouflage trousers are often worn by youths and Arabian scarfs are commonplace in everyday fashion. So the audience has a familiar impression of Macbeth. His arrival on the landing-pad on top of the garage brings his authority on the battlefield to the scene (Worksheet 5, Task 1). In Shakespeare's play and in all the film versions, Macbeth is taken by surprise, when the witches make their appearance and confront him with their greetings and their predictions (Act I, Scene 3: "All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor.... All hail Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter.>").

In each version Macbeth is taken under their spell in no time, despite Banquo's warning explanation (Act 1, Scene 3: "...to win us to our harm, The instruments of darkness tell us truths...").

As a second parallel to the play text and the old film versions, one might mention that he is easily swayed. The witches' supernatural behaviour, expressed by encircling him on their rollerblades and dropping the Tarot King card, traps him. After being surrounded several times and eventually picking up the King card, he is overwhelmed and cannot withstand their spell because of their quickness in arrival and departure, the witches are more part of Macbeth's subliminal thoughts than being physical entities in their own right, as shown in the old versions. Thus the witches become an expression of the evil side in Macbeth's subconscious, bringing out his ambition for power and suppressing his good nature, including his loyalty for the King.

The oxymoron "Fair is foul, and foul is fair", used by the witches (Act I, Scene1) is taken up by Macbeth in his introductory state-

ment in Act I, Scene 3 ("So foul and fair a day I have not seen.>").

Macbeth himself seems to personify the essence of this oxymoron. He is a man with "fair" and "foul" sides in his character. The full-shot of Macbeth leaning against the pillar in the car park and holding the King card shows his full personality with both his good and evil sides. Maybe this is the moment, when the flaws in his character start overwhelming his assets, despite the discarding of the Tarot card. Here, the topic of *reality and appearance* is touched, both in words and in vision (Worksheet 5, Task 2).

Weitere Medien

Shakespeare Shorts

46/42 10604 Romeo and Juliet - Love and Loyalty

Romeo und Julia - Liebe und Gehorsam, 2 x 20 min, f

46 02465 Macbeth - Power and Corruption.

Polanski's "The Tragedy of Macbeth", 33 min, f

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■ **VHS 42 10605**

■ ■ **Paket 50 10549** (DVD 46 10605 + VHS 42 10605)

2 x 21 min, Farbe

Shakespeare Shorts

Macbeth – The Witches' Power

Macbeth – Der Hexen Macht

Im Mittelpunkt des Films steht Akt I, Szene 1 und 3:
Die Hexen treffen sich auf der Heide und prophezei-
hen Macbeth den Machtgewinn. Macbeth steigt in sei-
nen geheimsten Phantasien auf sie ein. Der verehrte,
von allen geachtete Kämpfer und Sieger wandelt sich
unerkannt vom loyalen Kämpfer zum Königsmörder.
Eine junge Schauspielerin entwickelt ihre Auffassung
der Hexenfiguren und ihrer Macht durch kritischen
Vergleich ausgewählter Inszenierungsbeispiele und
in zwei Theaterproben. Im zweiten Teil werden die
Szenen in einer rasanten modernen Inszenierung ge-
spielt.

Der Film, in englischer Originalversion und deutscher
Bearbeitung der Moderation, bietet einen hervor-
ragenden Einstieg in das lehrplanzentrale Stück und
motiviert zur eigenen Umsetzung im Spiel. Die bilin-
gual DVD bietet im ROM-Teil umfangreiches Text-
und Arbeitsmaterial.

Schlagwörter

Shakespeare, Macbeth, Hexen, Inszenierungsvergleich,
Stilmittel, Medienkompetenz

Fremdsprachen

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Literatur, Dramatik • Darstellendes Spiel, Schultheater

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