

Roets – UConn ECE 1010 2018-19

Hamlet's Language: The play IS the thing

Hamlet is a four hundred year old play that is still in constant production. This begs the question that David Tennant attempted to answer in *Shakespeare Uncovered: why?* What does a 400 year old play offer to audiences through the ages? What might it have to offer, more specifically, to you – seniors in high school, 2017-2018? How does the Shakespearean language, so different from our own vernacular, still manage to convey such meaning to an audience? How much of the impact of the language is tied to its performance?

As an exercise in rhetorical analysis, and more importantly, an exercise in using Shakespeare's language in *Hamlet* to see ourselves and our world, you will choose a passage from the play that you find particularly effective and affecting. You can choose one of the major soliloquys or something more obscure, but it should be at least 14 lines in length. If you choose to perform with a partner, you would both need to deliver at least 14 lines, and explain the entire scene. Once you've made your choice, explore it. Start with why you chose it and what you think it means and then continue to break it down using all of the rhetorical tools at your disposal (rhetorical triangle, devices, appeals, literary devices, thematic meanings, etc). Pay particular attention to the speaker(s) of the lines; who is speaking and why? What are the circumstances and context of the lines (requires a pretty good understanding of the play overall)? What choices need to be made in its performance? How might the lines be delivered?

We might consider this a segmented "lab" like report.

Part I – introduction to your Shakespearean experience and explanation of your choice of text. (might include what it means to you particularly)

Part II – meaning of the text (you can use the rhetorical triangle as a model – but I would expect great detail)

Part III – choices in performance – what are the choices a performer might make to deliver this passage? There should be a multitude of choices, which can be informed by previous performances of the text (Branagh, Tennant, Kline, Gibson, etc. – check out Youtube) and then you should make your own choices – which you will use in YOUR performance of the text.

Part IV – the performance.