



Macbeth Macbeth and the Witches

Fill in the chart by providing descriptive details about how each director or actor portrays the associated device in Act 4, scene 1, of *Macbeth*. Then explain how the device works to characterize Macbeth's interaction with the witches.

Device	Polanski/Finch	Goold/Stewart
Setting		
Characterization		
Camera angles and lighting		
Symbolism		
Dramatic expression		

Use your completed chart to write a comparative analysis of the two interpretations. Here is your writing prompt:

After watching Roman Polanski's and Rubert Goold's interpretations of Act 4, scene 1, of *Macbeth*, analyze how the two depictions of the scene use different strategies to characterize the interaction between Macbeth and the witches. Your response must consider such elements as setting, characterization, camera angles and lighting, symbolism, and dramatic expression.

Comparative Analysis Rubric

1. Your analysis must include an acknowledgment of all related works. Use the following bibliographic information to provide an accurate presentation of this information.

Goold, Rubert, director. *Macbeth*. Performance by Patrick Stewart and Kate Fleetwood, PBS, 2010.

Polanski, Roman, director. *Macbeth*. Performance by Jon Finch and Francesca Annis, Columbia Pictures, 1971.

2. Your analysis must clearly and specifically demonstrate what is being compared.

3. Your analysis must provide a clear and direct answer to the prompt.

4. Body Paragraphs: You must write five body paragraphs exploring each device presented using a point-by-point comparison. The presentation must be written in a logical and parallel structure and use concrete descriptions from each film.

5. Conclusion: Your conclusion should consider the nature and purpose of the comparison and what it reveals about *Macbeth* and interpreting an author's (Shakespeare) work.

Answer Key

Sample Student Response

Device	Polanski/Finch	Goold/Stewart
Setting	Polanski sets this scene in an underground cavernous area. While the witches are also considered characters, the number of witches in the scene (far more than the three depicted in the play) fill up the background of the scene.	This scene is presented in an industrial-era morgue. The witches are dressed as nuns who are chanting behind a sterile plastic curtain. The centerpieces for this scene are the dead bodies that are animated by the witches to present the prophecies.
Characterization	The number of witches in the scene is overwhelming. The witches are also all nude, which makes them seem vulnerable. This helps give Macbeth the illusion that he is in control of the situation. The firelight only reveals some of Macbeth's surroundings, which also insinuates that he is only partially aware of what he is getting himself into.	The morgue is obviously representative of death. Goold uses the setting to further illustrate Macbeth's central fear: death and losing power. The witches' formal attire provides a hospital-like aesthetic, which, when combined with the plastic curtain, creates a very emotionless setting that, in contrast, enhances Macbeth's fearful reactions.
Camera angles and lighting	There are a fire and cauldron in the middle of the room that act as the centerpiece for the scene. The firelight is the only illumination in the area.	The lighting is dark and there is very little color in the scene, representing the dark powers at play. As the witches demonstrate their power, a strobe effect is used to stress the tension in the scene. Goold cuts quickly between characters to increase tension and uses close-ups of the actors to give a sense of entrapment.

Symbolism	<p>The apparitions that appear to Macbeth and convey the prophecies to him are symbolic representations that foreshadow his true fate, even though the actual prophecies each spirit gives are cryptic and purposely misleading. The second prophecy, for example, is given by a child who is depicted as being cut from his mother's womb (making it a man who is not of woman born). The child grows to manhood, wears armor, and hand Macbeth a sword, which he uses to slay it.</p>	<p>The apparitions in Goold's depiction of this scene are represented by cadavers in a morgue. The witches seem to apply electric shocks to the cadavers to make them rise from the dead and deliver the prophecies. The direct symbolic foreshadowing is essentially removed by this depiction. Instead, the re-animated cadavers speaking the prophecies represent the witches' power.</p>
Dramatic expression	<p>Finch's Macbeth acts boldly and arrogantly when faced with the supernatural. He confronts and commands the spirits to do his bidding. Finch's laughter is mocking and arrogant. He draws his sword often and acts as if he is not phased at all by the strange visions he is given.</p>	<p>Stewart depicts Macbeth as fearful and frantic. He is demanding of the witches, but there is a shakiness, a lack of confidence in his actions and voice. For example, after he receives the prophecy about Burnham Wood, his response seems joyful and confident, but his voice is still shaky and sounds as if he is about to cry.</p>