

Stage Lens Choices

Compare how production choices shape a drama's meaning.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.7 "Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details from each source play, circle each production choice, and number the passage's evaluative claims about what a version gains or loses.

When Scripts Become Productions

- ① Scripts do not arrive onstage with one fixed meaning. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the lovers speak in poetic, sixteenth-century language, yet the play also shows a public feud that turns Verona's streets violent. A production must decide which pressure viewers notice most. Costumes, setting, camera work, cuts, and actors' pauses can shape that decision without changing every line. To evaluate an interpretation, compare its choices with the source text and ask what those choices clarify, soften, or overlook. A striking version is not automatically faithful. It needs to make a defensible claim about the play's conflicts.
- ② Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 film places *Romeo and Juliet* in a visually historical Verona, with stone streets, period clothing, and crowded public spaces. Its youthful leads and close views of faces emphasize the lovers' vulnerability within an old social order. Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film keeps much of Shakespeare's dialogue but moves the action to the fictional, modern-looking Verona Beach. Guns replace swords, news footage and billboards crowd the screen, and the feud feels amplified by media spectacle. Zeffirelli makes the inherited feud seem physically inescapable, while Luhrmann makes it seem loudly public and fast-moving. Both readings fit the text's violent feud, but Luhrmann's rapid style can make quieter moments harder to notice.
- ③ Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* uses the 1692 Salem witch trials to examine accusation, fear, and authority. In the 1996 film adaptation, written by Miller, an opening scene shows girls dancing in the woods, an event reported before the play begins rather than staged in it. The film also adds meetings between John Proctor and Abigail Williams, making their past relationship more visible. These additions give viewers clearer motives and a wider view of Salem, but they reduce the play's uncertainty about what happened before its first scene. The stage script's withheld information can make the accusations feel more ominous and socially contagious.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 How do Zeffirelli's visual choices interpret the feud in *Romeo and Juliet*? Identify the source-text conflict that supports this interpretation.

- 2 How does Luhrmann's version interpret the feud differently from Zeffirelli's version? Include one limitation of Luhrmann's approach named in the passage.

- 3 What two additions does the 1996 film of *The Crucible* make, and how do they change the audience's understanding of the story?

- 4 Why might the stage script of *The Crucible* create more uncertainty than the 1996 film adaptation? Explain how that uncertainty affects the accusations.

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Choose either *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Crucible*. In 4 to 6 sentences, design a third production interpretation, naming two staging or film choices, explaining what source-text conflict they highlight, and evaluating one advantage and one limitation compared with a version in the passage.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details from each source play, circle each production choice, and number the passage's evaluative claims about what a version gains or loses. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do Zeffirelli's visual choices interpret the feud in Romeo and Juliet? Identify the source-text conflict that supports this interpretation.	His historical setting, stone streets, period clothing, and crowded spaces make the feud seem physically inescapable. This fits Shakespeare's violent public feud.
2	How does Luhrmann's version interpret the feud differently from Zeffirelli's version? Include one limitation of Luhrmann's approach named in the passage.	Luhrmann uses modern Verona Beach, guns, news footage, and billboards to make the feud seem loud, public, and fast-moving. Its rapid style can make quieter moments harder to notice.
3	What two additions does the 1996 film of The Crucible make, and how do they change the audience's understanding of the story?	It stages the girls dancing in the woods and adds meetings between Proctor and Abigail. These choices provide clearer motives, show more of Salem, and make their past relationship more visible.
4	Why might the stage script of The Crucible create more uncertainty than the 1996 film adaptation? Explain how that uncertainty affects the accusations.	The script withholds information about events before the first scene, while the film shows or adds those events. The withheld information can make the accusations seem more ominous and socially contagious.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My Romeo and Juliet would set the balcony scene on a narrow apartment fire escape above a street where rival families gather. A sound design of distant sirens and shouted insults would keep the public feud present even during the lovers' private language. The cramped height would highlight how their relationship depends on temporary separation from the violence below. Unlike Luhrmann's quick, media-filled style, this quieter production could make the poetic dialogue easier to hear. Its limitation is that it might show less clearly how the feud becomes a public spectacle.

Accept equivalent comparisons that connect a specific production choice to a source-text conflict and explain its effect. For the open task, require two concrete choices, a defensible interpretation, and a comparative evaluation with both an advantage and a limitation.