

HAMLET'S FAMOUS SOLILOQUY

LEAD IN

1 Answer the following questions and discuss your answers with your classmates.

1. Has a film ever made you want to read a novel?
2. What different experience is offered by a play performed in the theatre and a play adapted for the cinema?
3. What advantages can a film version of a play offer?

VOCABULARY Lab

2 Find the translation of the following words or phrases (1-8) in the paragraphs.

1. ruolo di protagonista
2. un cast di grandi nomi
3. fedele
4. allestimento
5. regista
6. adattamento
7. ambientazione
8. attore

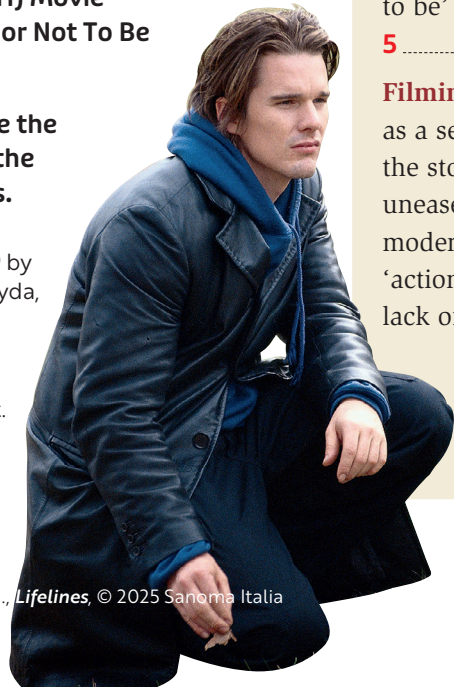
WATCH & COMPLETE

3  **Youtube** Watch the video clips showing Hamlet's famous soliloquy:

- 'To be or not to be - Kenneth Branagh HD (HAMLET)'
- 'Hamlet (6/11) Movie CLIP - To Be or Not To Be (2000) HD'

Then complete the reviews with the missing words.

→ *Hamlet 2000* by Michael Almereyda, starring Ethan Hawke as a pensive and modern Hamlet.



Hamlet

by Kenneth Branagh (1996)

Directed by: Kenneth Branagh, who also plays the main role, this film adaptation is notable for its faithful adherence to Shakespeare's original text and its star-studded cast. Its 19th century setting allows a more grandiose set and costume design and brings the work closer to modern audiences.

Setting: in Branagh's version, the soliloquy is delivered by Hamlet **1** he is walking through the hallway of a castle.

Filming technique: as he speaks, the camera follows him from **2** , and sees him in a full-length mirror, emphasising his isolation and introspection.

Visual effects: Branagh's version of *Hamlet* sees the Prince of Denmark recite his soliloquy in a vast, apparently empty hall in Elsinore castle where cold black, white and gold colours dominate and the eerie silence is broken only by Hamlet's footsteps. Hamlet himself is dressed in mourning black. Branagh, director and actor, underlines the introspective, contemplative nature of the great monologue by having Hamlet literally **3** to himself as he stands in front of the mirror, offering the audience the same, intimate point of view as the protagonist.



Hamlet 2000

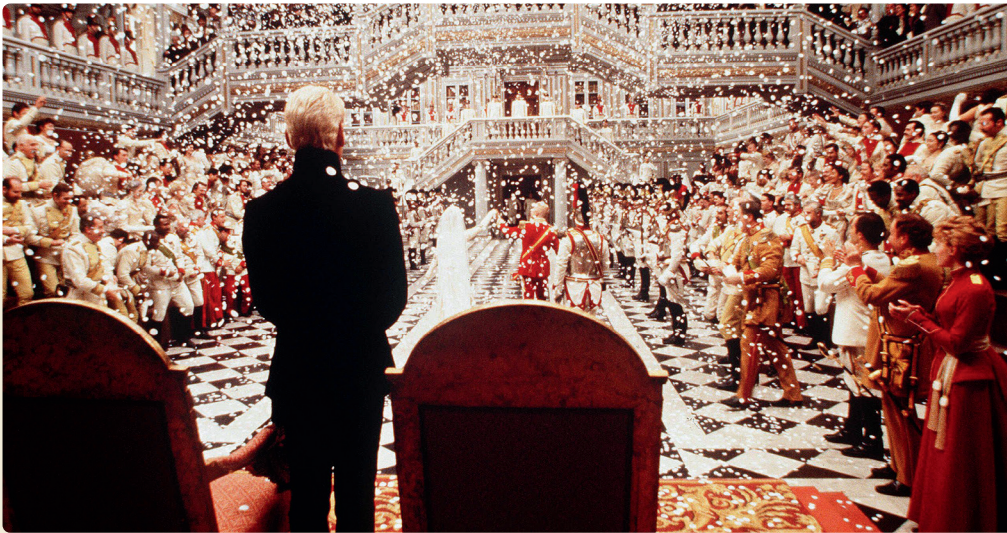
by Michael Almereyda (2000)

Directed by: Michael Almereyda, starring Ethan Hawke as Hamlet, this film adaptation is set in modern-day New York City and incorporates contemporary elements such as video cameras and business meeting rooms.

Setting: in this modern adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy is delivered by Hamlet in the middle of a Blockbuster video store, **5** he works as a sales clerk.

Filming technique: Almereyda incorporates modern elements into the scene, such as a security camera capturing Hamlet's every move, and an intercom announcing the store's closing time. **6** elements add to the sense of unease and surveillance, reflecting the societal pressures and anxieties of the modern era. The video clips of violent movie scenes played on screens in the 'action' section of the shop underline this and ironically reflect on Hamlet's lack of action.

Visual effects: the setting of the Blockbuster store is a symbol of consumerism and the fleeting nature of entertainment, contrasting **7** the weighty philosophical themes of the soliloquy.

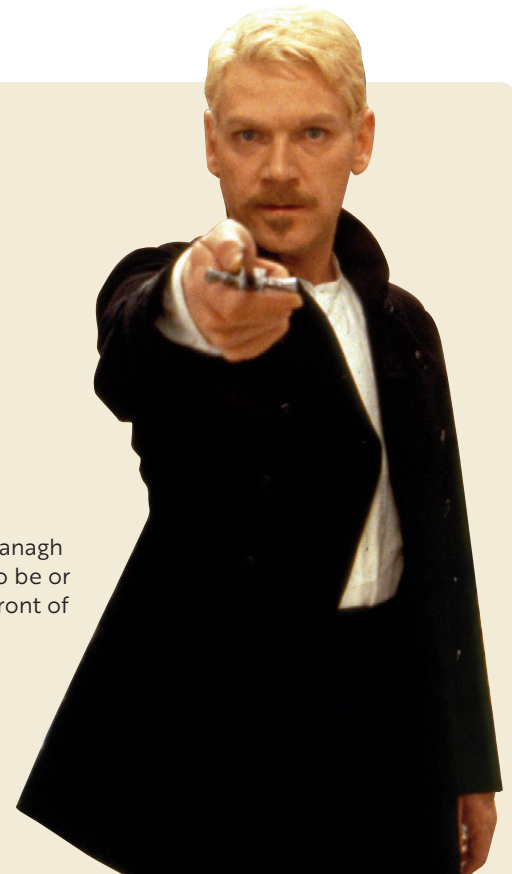


↑ A scene from the film *Hamlet* by Kenneth Branagh (1996). Claudius has hastily married Gertrude, the King's widow and Hamlet's mother, claiming the throne for himself.

Interpretation: Branagh's interpretation of the soliloquy is relatively traditional, with the focus on the contemplation of life and 4 , and the nature of existence. However, he emphasises the melancholic nature of the speech, and the despair that Hamlet feels.

Overall effect: overall, Branagh's staging of the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy is effective in conveying the deep melancholy and existential angst of the character of Hamlet, and emphasises the play's themes of mortality and the human condition.

→ Kenneth Branagh interpreting 'To be or not to be' in front of a mirror.



Interpretation: Hawke's interpretation of the soliloquy is 8 modern and existential, with Hamlet pondering the meaning of life and the human condition in a contemporary context. As he speaks, the camera moves in close to Hamlet's face, highlighting his internal struggle and anxiety.

Overall effect: overall, Hawke's staging of the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy is a fresh and contemporary interpretation, emphasising the existential nature of the speech and the universal struggle of the human condition, while incorporating modern elements to add depth and symbolism to the scene.

→ Ethan Hawke interpreting 'To be or not to be' in a Blockbuster store.



BE A FILM CRITIC

4 Answer the following questions.

1. Which version do you consider more 'traditional'? Why?
2. What aspects of the two performers are very similar?
3. Do the two different settings have anything in common?
4. How does the Ethan Hawke version deal with the question of action?
5. Which version do you prefer? Why?

WRITING Lab SHORT ESSAY

5 If you were a contemporary film director, how would you stage a modern version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*? What setting would you choose? What lighting effects would you add? What actor (or actress) would you choose? Why? Write a short text (max. 200 words) to express your ideas.