

Hinweise für den Prüfling

Einlese- und Auswahlzeit: 30 Minuten

Bearbeitungszeit: 240 Minuten

Auswahlverfahren

Wählen Sie von den zwei vorliegenden Vorschlägen einen zur Bearbeitung aus. Der nicht ausgewählte Vorschlag muss am Ende der Einlesezeit der Aufsicht führenden Lehrkraft zurückgegeben werden.

Die Vorschläge können auch alternative Arbeitsanweisungen enthalten.

Erlaubte Hilfsmittel

1. Wörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtschreibung
2. ein einsprachiges Wörterbuch

Sonstige Hinweise

keine

In jedem Fall vom Prüfling auszufüllen

Name: _____	Vorname: _____
Prüferin / Prüfer: _____	Datum: _____

The Shakespearean Tragedy

Assignments

1. Give an outline of O'Flinn's theses. **(30 BE)**

2. Analyse to what extent O'Flinn's idea of the conflict between the old order and the new order ("the decay of feudalism and the possibilities that opened up" (l. 24)) is reflected in the Shakespeare tragedy read in class. **(35 BE)**

3. Not only the Elizabethan world was full of potential for the individual and society. Where do you see, today, "in a socially mobile world" (l. 55), possibilities of self-realisation and fulfilment – and their limitations? Discuss. **(35 BE)**

Material**Paul O'Flinn: William Shakespeare and More Original Sin**

If you read one of Shakespeare's tragedies at school, the odds are you were asked to spend a lot of time in class talking about what they call the hero's tragic flaw – that fault in his character which brings about his downfall. The immaturity of Romeo, the procrastination of Hamlet, the jealousy of Othello, the ambition of Macbeth – these are the weaknesses, so the story goes, which in the end draw these people to their deaths. Interpretation of this kind is very common. There are two other things that need saying about it: it's extremely reactionary and it has nothing to do with Shakespeare. [...]

When the religious mind is confronted with a mess – especially the kind of mess we find at the end of Shakespearean tragedy with the stage covered with dead bodies – its natural reaction is not to look for structural causes but rather to beat our breast and cry: "Let us root out the evil in our own hearts!" In literary terms this means blaming the mess at the end of Shakespearean tragedy not on some sort of clash between the hero and his world but rather on the evil in the hero's heart, his tragic flaw. Thus the notion of tragic flaw becomes a kind of literary equivalent of our old favourite, original sin. [...]

What the Marxist tries to do is avoid lumbering the work with dogmatic categories like tragic flaw. Instead he attempts to make sense of it with analysis that is in the first place sociological. By this I mean that he tries to understand the work not in the light of someone's bright – or highly slanted – idea but by placing the work in that actual society where it belongs and where it developed. [...]

About Shakespeare's world we need to say three things, however briefly. First, he lived in an age of sharp transition when feudalism was finally falling apart - the Rising of the Northern Earls in 1569 when Shakespeare was 5 is normally described by historians as feudalism's last bid for power - and in an age when the pre-conditions for capitalist society were being laid. Secondly, out of the decay of feudalism and the possibilities that opened up, there was an explosive growth of confidence in human abilities and in the capacities of the human mind that expressed itself in literature as the Elizabethan Renaissance. That literature is full of delight in men and women, in their qualities and liberated individualities. Hamlet's famous lines "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties!, in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!" could not have been imagined by the medieval mind, obsessed as it was by a sense of man's fallen nature. Shakespeare's three dozen plays with their armies of rich characters are together an impressive celebration of human potential freed, or apparently beginning to be freed, by the struggles of sixteenth and seventeenth century history.

Thirdly, the theatre Shakespeare wrote for was a new, capitalist theatre. In other words it worked by charging people for admission and making a profit. Capitalism at first means an immense expansion of the possible. Before the 1570s dramatic performances were infrequent, usually put on for a small elite in one of the great houses. The dramatist was dependent for his livelihood on pleasing aristocratic patrons – which often meant producing what Orwell calls "revolting flatteries". With the building of commercial theatres a dozen or so years before Shakespeare started his career, plays could now be aimed at a much wider public - at the

penny-a-timers in the pit as well as at the seated gentry. This meant new prospects, much wider horizons, and was another liberating force.

45 What does all this mean for Shakespeare's tragedies? First, it means massive, highly individualised characters, the first of their kind in literature. Into these characters Shakespeare projects contemporary dreams of total self-realisation. His characters exploit the possibilities that the newly glimpsed freedoms seem to offer. But tragedy in Shakespeare springs again and again from the clash between men and women awakened, men and women battling to fulfil themselves, and Shakespeare's sense, shaped by his times, of the very tiny room for
50 genuine self-realisation that the world actually offers. [...]

Tragedy in Shakespeare therefore springs not from the hero's flaw or sin but from his dislocation, his attempt to live in ways that his society suggests but does not yet accept. So, for example, Macbeth and his wife are desperate to climb a rung higher on the social ladder, a desire which capitalist society has since come to insist on as the motor of all human progress.
55 But they do not live in a socially mobile world; theirs is a feudal one where you are born into a certain station and stay there. Out of that contradiction grows their tragedy. [...]

Schools aren't in business to teach subversive literature so they stand Shakespeare on his head. You can begin by putting him the right way up.
(853 words)

<http://www.marxists.de/culture/them-n-us/09-shake1.htm>