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Candidate session number			
Candidate name			
School name			
Examination session (May or November)	May	Year	2015

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: ~~Theatre~~ ^{Literature and} Performance
(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: With regard to "Night, Mother" by
Marsha Norman, how and in what ways are the themes of
illness and control portrayed more efficiently in either the film adaption or the play.

Candidate's declaration

This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature:

Date: 2/26/2015

Supervisor's report and declaration

The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) _____

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

did fantastic work on this extended essay. She kept herself to a timeline and stuck to it, making the essay a priority in her studies. She chose the topic after being inspired by reading this play in class and watching student performances of it. Her love and passion for the play itself and the characters involved kept her intrigued to complete the research. She found some wonderful sources, though I believe she could have made use of interviews with actors/directors as well as play reviews. She struggled midway through with solidifying her argument and clarifying her issue with control. However, she was "fired up" to

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued. Keep working

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner. and succeeding

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate. and she did!

As per the section entitled "Responsibilities of the Supervisor" in the EE guide, the recommended number of hours spent with candidates is between 3 and 5 hours. Schools will be contacted when the number of hours is left blank, or where 0 hours are stated and there lacks an explanation. Schools will also be contacted in the event that number of hours spent is significantly excessive compared to the recommendation. ✓

I spent 4 hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature:

Date: 2.26.15

Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Candidate session number		
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Achievement level

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	2	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
B introduction	1	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
C investigation	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
D knowledge and understanding	1	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
E reasoned argument	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
F analysis and evaluation	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
G use of subject language	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
H conclusion	1	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
I formal presentation	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
J abstract	2	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
K holistic judgment	1	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
Total out of 36	<input style="width: 50px; height: 25px;" type="text" value="18"/>		<input style="width: 50px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>		<input style="width: 50px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>

Name of examiner 1: _____ Examiner number: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 2: _____ Examiner number: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 3: _____ Examiner number: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

IB Assessment Centre use only: B: _____

IB Assessment Centre use only: A: _____

The Difference between the Literature and the Performance of '*Night, Mother* by Marsha Norman

Research Question: With regard to '*Night, Mother* by Marsha Norman, how and in what ways are the themes of illness and control portrayed more efficiently in either the film adaption or the play? ✓

International Baccalaureate Extended Essay
Literature and Performance
May 2015

Word Count: 3,737

Abstract

RA Title p.

I have always been interested in both the performing arts and literature, so when I was presented with the opportunity to research the tactics used in presenting themes that connected throughout literature and performance I was enthralled. When I had seen a monologue performed from the play *'Night, Mother*, I instantly fell in love with the play and wanted to learn as much as I could about it. I read the play, read articles about the play, watched the films, read comments on the film so that I could learn more about the literature and performance. As an actor and literature enthusiast, I strive to find as many tactics to understanding a character and performing the role well, so I wanted to see how the genius workings of Marsha Norman were portrayed from her literature to the film she helped produce based off the play. This paper intends to find which form does the play justice: the reading of the literature or viewing of the performance. RA

In order to determine which form is superior, I examined the aspects of each work. Through the literary devices used in the play, and the performance techniques used in the film, I determined which format allows the audience to obtain understanding and meaning from the play. I have ^{conc.} concluded that the film does this better than the play. Plays are meant to be performed, one would argue this would be quite obvious. However, when any play is not followed well in the film the play loses its meaning and the film ends up ruining the play. The film enhanced the play and allowed the reader of the play to see the ideas presented in the literature come to life through the actors in the film. Thus, the performance is an improvement upon the literature. process

3 elements

Word Count: 300

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Conclusion.....	10
Bibliography.....	12

Introduction

Everyone hates getting sick, the loss of motivation and strength to do our daily business that being sick strips away from us. Humans hate not having control over events in general, and we will do anything to insure we always have control. So when we get sick and lose that ability ^{control/sig} to have control we all can go a little mad, but thankfully our sicknesses often pass. However the aforementioned scenario never ends for Marsha Norman's protagonist Jessie Cates in her play *'Night Mother'*. Jessie is a young woman suffering from epilepsy, an illness that causes seizures, who constantly battles with the preceding scenario of being 'sick'. The thought of being sick for one week is incomparable to the life Jessie lives in *'Night Mother'*, which causes this character to have issues with her illness and also with control. This illness then affects every other aspect of ✓ Jessie's life, and she becomes obsessed with the idea of controlling every aspect of life that she can, since her illness is uncontrollable. Throughout the play Norman makes it evident that Jessie has an issue with her illness, and her control over events. These themes are hopefully transferred through the use of literary devices and performance techniques from the film adaption of the play from 1986, and I will be assessing which method portrays these themes exceptionally. end?

One literary device used in the play is the symbol of the clock, and the time at which the play occurs during. Marsha Norman stresses the importance of the clock starting at 8:15 and running throughout the show, and being completely visible to the audience in the first few pages preceding to the play. This creates a stressful scene for an unsuspecting audience, because of age old sayings of limited time before we die. The clock may make the audience count the minutes ✓ Jessie has left, or count how much longer the awkward conversation they have stumbled upon may last. However, in the film a clock is not shown, the only information the audience has time-wise is that it is getting dark out and the characters are getting ready for bed. In the beginning of the film, Jessie picks up two clocks, looks at one and smiles to herself, and then places them both

in a basket, showing time is no longer a necessity for her. She then puts both clocks in her mother's room, symbolizing her mother is the only one who needs them and foreshadowing her own demise. The film also seems to start earlier in the day than Norman had written in her play, however since no clock is shown it could be anytime in the day. No clocks in the film create a different feeling as the night moves on, building a never-ending conversation between mother and daughter. With reference to these preceding points, Norman writes Jessie in the play as needing to be in control of time, since she wants to the audience to always know what time it is, and she even has Jessie complain about not knowing when she is going to die, ^{eg?} so she set a time for herself to make death less scary. Instead, the film shows Jessie as having come to terms with the fact she is going to commit suicide, and that she no longer needs control of the clocks she gives to her mother, which is further supported by the audience not being shown a clock. With these points it is difficult to assume which mode is more efficient, as both show different sides to the ideas of control over time, so the clock symbol is more specific to the viewer and has less of an effect on the overall theme. ✓

It's not always about Jessie; Ma also has her own issues with control. Ma's issues stem from an unhappy marriage, and unhappy daughter, and her own depression. To portray Ma's own issues with control, the play uses her word choice in Ma's dialog ^{eg?} to make this clear to the reader. The film uses the actress' facial expressions and tone of voice to convey the same message. It is clear that Ma did not love her husband, as is displayed right from the start of the play. She speaks of his death without any compassion, and throughout the play patronizes Jessie for loving her father because Ma does not believe he was a good man. This is portrayed in Ma's words in the play "How could I love him? I didn't have a thing he wanted" (pg 46), and through Ma's facial expression in the film, always showing displeasure when he was in the

conversation. Ma complains about the coconut falling off the snowball she is eating, complaining "Why does the coconut always fall off?" (pg 5). She has no control over her eating habits, and is shown having a sort of sweets addiction, which Jessie must always keep the house stocked for her. This negative state of mind that Ma is always in is portrayed more in the literature, since her sentences are always well thought out and thoroughly bitter. In the film, the actress makes Ma seem almost too happy, using a higher register when speaking, and while it is important to acknowledge the actress' choice Ma's overt happiness in the film fails the message of the play. Ma is upset that she has lost control over her daughter, and of so many other things, that her contentment in the film makes it seem as though she doesn't care about control when in reality she cares a lot. Overall, the literature shows Ma's need for control and contributes to the overarching theme of control much better than the performance does. ^{with} ^{but how?}

In the first few pages of the play, Norman describes most details about her characters in the way that she intends for them to be portrayed. This is extremely helpful, because it helps give the readers or potential directors an early inside view to the character's personalities. The first few lines about Jessie claim that she is "pale and vaguely unsteady physically" (Page 2, *Night, Mother*), and continues to reference Jessie being on the slightly larger side throughout the play. ^{where?} However, the actress Sissy Spacek who is casted in the film is very thin and appears to not have any desire for the sweets she is storing for her mother. This works for the film because it shows her as having more control over herself, whereas Jessie being heavier in the play shows her as having lapses of lost control which both fit her character. In this case both portrayals of the character work, however Norman clearly wanted a heavier character. ^{and?}

Moving on, the play makes no mention to the early scenes of the film, which are added to help set the scene, would have been written in a play have to be visual in a film. In these first few

scenes, Jessie is going around the house organizing and putting the candies on display for her mother who obsesses over them. This shows Jessie's desire for control, because she needs everything to be perfectly set for her mother before Jessie ends her life. This is not in the play, and might make a good addition to the play so as to set Jessie's obsessive disorder early on in the play. This theme of obsession is continued as the play progresses, such as Jessie cleaning and re-cleaning the house, organizing Ma's room, calling the store and newspaper to make arrangements for Ma, all down to strategically organizing what Ma is to do with all of Jessie's old belongings once she reaches her fate. According to Harvard Health Publications¹, these are all symptoms of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, otherwise known as OCD. It is also quite possible that the anxiety provoked from this disorder can spark seizures, which Jessie suffers from. Overall, Jessie's constant need to have the house organized perfectly, all the way down to the organization of food, directly relates to her need of control. The evidence shown here conveys the film in a more positive light than the literature, because the audience is allowed to view how Jessie needs to have control. While the play allows the audience to understand that she is dominated by a need for control, the film makes this idea much more clear, and is more accurate to the character *how established?*

The entire play contains the motif of suicide, specifically Jessie killing herself, which is clear right from the beginning when Jessie states to her mother that she was planning on committing suicide. It is unquestionable that Jessie has an obsession with suicide; Norman makes the entire play about her constant thoughts of suicide, [?] and her self-hatred. What is done quite well in the film is Jessie's intense control while discussing such a serious subject. With any play, there are many interpretations as to how dialog can be spoken between characters, and the play illustrates that the two characters could go about these discussions any way. Spacek makes a

¹ http://www.helpguide.org/mental/obsessive_compulsive_disorder OCD.htm

favorable decision to have Jessie stay so calm, because she has put so much thought into her decision and since she has always strived for control it makes sense for her to want to have control of her last night on Earth. The play keeps these discussions open to interpretation because everyone deals with hurt and the process of making decisions differently, and allows producers, actors, and readers, to feel a stronger connection with Jessie. The obsession with suicide directly correlates with both themes of control and illness, since Jessie wants to have control of her own death and since 'her illness won't kill her' she feels she has to do it herself. In the case of Jessie's suicide and the build up to it, both the play and the film do a great job of portraying the author's true intent for the work. *needs supporting detail*

Now, to dig deep into the disease ^{why?} that Jessie suffers from, epilepsy is a very common disease that has been known for a very long time. Epilepsy was first mentioned in a text found in the 6th century B.C., by the Babylonians and then the Greeks, and was first described as "Hippocratic disease" in the Hippocratic text of 350 B.C.². This clearly shows how the disorder has been around for a very long time, so there is quite a lot of information on it. To start, the disorder is considered to be mainly hereditary, since it is usually caused by mutated genes³. Another way to get the disorder can be due to prenatal problems, such as poor nutrition or anything that may affect the embryos development, or trauma to its head. This could make the reader deduct^e that perhaps it is the mother's fault, for not taking care of herself during the pregnancy, ^{and?} which is arguable considering Ma is so possessive over Jessie. Is she protective because she feels guilt for possibly causing this disorder, or is there another factor she wishes to save Jessie from? Thus, the father is considered, since it is clearly stated throughout the play that they husband and wife did not really love each other, and that there were many problems in the

² <http://www.ct-ea.org/faq.html>

³ http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/epilepsy/detail_epilepsy.htm

relationship, as shown by the quotation “How could I love him, Jessie. I didn’t have a thing he wanted” (page 46, ^{repeated} ‘Night, Mother’). This could lead the reader to believe that the father could have hit Ma or Jessie, or somehow caused enough traumas that Jessie was diagnosed with this disorder. Hinting back at the long history this disease has, Norman could be poking at the idea that abuse is a very common theme that has been happening for many years, ^{indeed} but I digress. How Jessie acquired this disorder is important to ponder because it obviously connects to the theme of illness, but also the theme of control when Ma is considered. Without the illness, there would be no need for the characters infatuation with control, and the literature better conveys the disease due simply to the allowance of subtext. The film does not show anything that is not in the play, so the play is more important in the sense that it needs to set the foundation of the story and its connection to the illness before the film can.

To continue, many children and adults who have this disorder are said to have more emotional or behavioral problems⁴. These problems are associated with the embarrassment the disorder causes for the children especially since it can stop them from participating in certain activities, or due to bullying from other people in social settings. There is a very important quotation on how to minimize these effects, which is: “In children, these problems can be minimized if parents encourage a positive outlook and independence, do not reward negative behavior with unusual amounts of attention, and try to stay attuned to their child's needs and feelings. “Families must learn to accept and live with the seizures without blaming or resenting the affected person.”. It is apparent that this is not the case in Jessie’s life, and this is represented many times throughout the play. Ma explains to Jessie that her father never really cared about her, as shown in the quotation “He said you were a runt... He said you didn’t have a chance.”

⁴ http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/epilepsy/detail_epilepsy.htm

(Page 48, 'Night Mother'). While Jessie's father is part of the blame, since he obviously resented Jessie for her disorder, Ma is not unscathed. Ma takes Jessie in, claiming that it was so Jessie could help her, but Jessie ^{end?} seems to know that it is because her mom wants to keep an eye on her. This shows that Ma is hurting Jessie, and furthering her emotional problems by not being attuned to Jessie's feelings and rather focusing on her own. Here we see how Ma is trying to help herself more than she is helping Jessie, which negatively affects Jessie. We see this furthered in the film, since it is clear Ma ^{when? always?} wasn't home with Jessie, she instead was out with a friend, which not only gives Jessie ample time to think about her suicide, but also allows for Ma to be further distanced from her daughter's feelings. Overall, Jessie's parents are not well equipped to dealing with Jessie's disorder, and this greatly affects her emotionally. Since Jessie is let down by her parents, she becomes more captivated by control and finds ways to control herself, aside from her parents lack of control over her. Furthermore, the relationship between Ma and Jessie is built well in both the play and the film; however the film lacks the relationship between Jessie and her father, which makes the play the clear winner in this category. *seems to be the essential mode for the critique*

Aforementioned, the actress who plays Jessie, Sissy Spacek, is very thin, even though it is stated that people with this disorder should eat mostly fats⁵. It has been made clear through studies done on the topic that allowing the body to break down fats instead of quick carbohydrates is beneficial. Since this is made clear in the play that Jessie is a heavy set girl, the film adaption should have stayed true to this as it is an important aspect of her illness. On the other hand, the actress did a very good job portraying the stress and anxiety that the illness gives Jessie, through her body language and movement. She moves quickly through the house, obsessing and stressing over the little things, really showing that need for control. This is exactly

⁵ http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/epilepsy/detail_epilepsy.htm

how Jessie would act, as she is very concerned about leaving her mother when she commits suicide. Since she has no control over the illness, she feels the need to have control over the things that happen in the house, which is also why she never leaves the house since she cannot control things outside of the house. The play lacks in this sense, because the reader only knows what Jessie is saying, and not how she is feeling about what she is saying. This is mainly because plays are meant to be performed, and since plays mainly can only tell the reader what the characters are saying, and there is not enough room to add in the exact emotion to each and every line, since that is part of the actor's job. In this sense, the film essentially better than the play, since the actors bring the words to life, and while Norman is a beautiful writer it is far more entertaining to see the plot come to life.

A quick look into the author of this plays personal background, Marsha Norman grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, and some critics agree that the lifestyle associated with this location often influenced her writing⁶. The motif of a southern lifestyle versus a Midwestern lifestyle is something that discussed in an article about "Norman's bi-regional vision", is clearly visible in this play, and works very well in helping convey the theme of control. The article considers that "If Southern characters frequently garnish their narratives with zest and color, their Midwestern counterparts more often struggle with words and find escape in silence or the simple dignity of daily rituals."⁷ In this sense, it is clear that Jessie is the Midwestern type of character, while Ma is the Southern type of character, further supported by Ma claiming that her husband "Wanted a plain country woman and that's what he married" (46, 'night, Mother). Just looking at the general outlook of the two characters, Jessie enjoys staying in her house, cleaning and, yes, being

⁶ David Radavich, "Marsha Norman's Bi-Regional Vision in "Night, Mother," *The Mississippi Quarterly* 64, no. 1-2 (2011), <https://www.questiaschool.com/read/1G1-280965532>.

⁷ Ibid

in control of the 'simple dignity of daily rituals. Ma on the other hand enjoys telling her stories to anyone who will listen, and even lying about her friend possibly burning down houses for the fun of it, just to gain a reaction. These archetypes flow graciously on and off screen, since the play is followed so well in the film the actors simply allow for these generalizations to come to life from the dialog written. However, the film better allows the audience to see how Jessie enjoys the daily duties, and although she does mention in the play that she enjoys helping her mother out, the film does a better job at presenting Jessie as a Midwestern type of character. Her silences are crucial in her portrayal of the Midwestern type of character, and those simply cannot be accomplished on paper, which is another improvement of the film. However, the play does an outstanding job creating Ma as a southern character, since her stories are so full of color, and she does not struggle with control as much as Jessie does, which furthers the two archetypes. Overall, the characters fit well into the bi-regional vision possessed by Norman in a scarily perfect way.

The physical setting of the play, however, also fits into this bi-regional vision idea, in many different ways. The house itself, chosen by the director of the film, is very nondescript, and is only visible for a short time on screen, making the outside hard to connect to anything. Rather, the inside of the house fits into both general ideas presented above of the Midwest and Southern messages. The first few pages of the play really go into detail on the house, describing it as "more comfortable than messy... more personal than charming" (4, 'night, Mother), which is very much like the Midwestern style, to make the home fit them and be organized in a way in which they can understand. This is clearly Jessie's makings, since she is the one to organize the house, so this plays into her obsession with control as well as her Midwestern archetype. Then, the page continues to describe magazines everywhere, and since magazines are a timekeeper of

current events, this aspect fits into the southern aspect. The magazines are something that Ma must keep around to entertain herself, which fits into her southern character type since it is a sign of her history, which is a part of the southern ideal. The film does these ideas justice as well, however the film house is a bit too clean and orderly, ^{by what norm?} and therefore almost cuts Ma's aspects out completely. The film instead has some family photos around, which plays into the ideas of ancestral history that is associated with the southern lifestyle, but the tone that the magazines set is lost here. Here, the playwright knows best, and the play better sets the physical aspect of the bi-regional vision, which is slightly surprising considering it is easier to see a physical set than to read it.

In conclusion, the theme of control is portrayed throughout the film and the play, and both are beneficial in understanding the overarching message of the performance. Jessie is a strong character who happened to develop a disorder that she allowed to destroy her view on life, and the play takes this and allows audiences to question their own views on their life and their sense of control. This play is powerful enough to make any reader cry at the idea of the ending, while still allowing them to understand the logic that is presented by this character. The film then makes this idea come to life and makes viewers feel as though they are stuck inside this house with the characters, and makes them question themselves just as the play does. While the film forces the audience to understand, the play is also beautifully written and could entice any reader into its workings. Both formats use their own methods to portray the intended meaning behind the story, and both succeed into creating an interesting plot. While the film sometimes strayed from the literature, the significance sent through the film often outranked the literature and was more alluring to audiences. Even with the different methods used and the differing messages conveyed, the story itself is compelling to any audience, and by viewing both styles audiences

✓

get even more views on the life of the characters that they can even use in their own lives.

Theatre is meant to have an effect on its audience, and this piece does just that, in two ^{show} different

forms. The work is controlling, and thus its main theme forces its characters and readers into the

same dark trap. While I recognize art effects each viewer differently, I strongly believe that the

film version of *Night, Mother* is far superior to the literature version.

The approach is descriptive and reactive, with some evidence to support the latter. Needs more analysis of the aims and techniques used in the film performance.

Some sections are not relevant to the investigation as an LP essay.

Tracing the promised themes not clearly delineated.

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