



 **Prestwick House**

Free Lesson Plan

TEACHING MEDIA:

Analyzing multiple interpretations of literature

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7)

by Douglas Grudzina



Objectives:

- Compare and contrast a work of literature with at least one adaptation into a different genre or medium (e.g., novel to film, stage play to film, etc.)
- Infer reasons for an artist's decisions when adapting a work from one genre or medium to another
- Evaluate the effectiveness of such choices
- Support all inferences and evaluations with direct reference to the source material

Time:

180 Minutes
or 3 Class Periods

Equipment and Materials:

Text of literary work (sufficient copies for each student to have one)
Video(s) of adaptation(s)
Necessary projection and sound equipment for videos

Handouts (see page 5):

- General Information question sheets (1 per student)
- Surface Comparison question sheets (1 per student)
- Surface Comparison Chart—model (1 per student)
- Surface Comparison Chart—blank (1 per student)

NOTE: ultimately, students will have completed Surface Comparison Charts for:

- Plot
- Setting
- Character
- Theme or Central Idea
- Overall Mood or Atmosphere

Summary and Review Chart—model (1 per student)
Summary and Review Chart —blank (students may need multiple copies)

Procedure:

(Prior to this lesson)

1. Have students read the text.
2. Present or have students view selected video(s).

(First class period)

1. Distribute the General Information question sheet, the Surface Comparison question sheet, and Surface Comparison Chart (both model and blank).
2. Explain to students that the purpose of the activity is to study the process of adapting a printed text to another medium on a deeper level than merely creating a list of differences and similarities between the two.
3. Review the questions on both the General Information and the Surface Comparison question sheets. (You may need to provide specific facts like the date of initial publication, theatrical release, or first public performance.)
4. As a class, discuss the similarities and differences between the original text and the adaptation(s), and have your students take notes on their General Information and Surface Comparison question sheets.

or

Have students independently answer the questions on the two question sheets.

5. Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one aspect of the text to explore:
 - Plot
 - Setting
 - Character
 - Theme or Central Idea
 - Overall Mood or Atmosphere
6. In their groups, have students consider their assigned aspect and then determine what they believe to be the key changes from original to adaptation. Have each group note those changes on the Surface Comparison Chart.
7. If time allows, you may wish to conduct a short discussion based on the Surface Comparison questions and the students' observations and reflections.

(Second class period)

8. Distribute the Summary and Review Chart (both model and blank).
9. Remind students that their goal is to understand the process of adapting a literary text into a different medium on a deeper level than merely listing the changes.
10. Instruct students to examine the details of the surface comparisons they recorded in Step 1 and to summarize or generalize the overall nature of the changes made. Have them record their ideas in the appropriate spaces in the Summary and Review Chart.
11. As students summarize and qualify the changes they recorded earlier, have them note any trends that emerge across multiple elements.
12. Invite students to infer the reasons or principles that motivated the changes made by the adaptor.
13. Finally, ask them to evaluate the extent to which the adaptor's changes were effective in fulfilling his or her apparent intents.

(Third class period)

14. Conduct a recap discussion with your students.

Discussion Questions:

NOTE: *The answers to all of these questions will vary depending on the specific work of literature under discussion. The primary purpose of this discussion is to allow students to hear their classmates' views and reasoning.*

While many of these questions are subjective opinion questions, all of them require further explanation and support. You should hold all students accountable to grounding their opinions in an accurate reading (or viewing) of the material, and a developing knowledge of the principles of literature and media.

1. What are some of the factors that you found prompted changes between an original work and its film adaptation?

Factors prompting change could include:

- *appealing to a broader potential audience.*
- *addressing social, political, moral, etc., changes in the target audience (for example, from the publication of a 19th-century novel and the release of a 2015 film adaptation).*
- *increasing commercial appeal.*
- *advancing a particular new interpretation.*
- *sophistication (and cost) of available technology.*

a. What effect does a change of genre have on how an adaptor might choose to change the original text?

Answers can include:

- *Everything is possible in print—limited only by the imaginations of the author and the reader and the ability of language to convey it.*
- *Readers of novels are generally willing to devote more time to experience the novel than viewers are willing to spend watching a film.*
- *Readers accept the fact that everything they get out of novel will come to them through words; viewers of a film expect images and sounds to carry much of the impact of the film.*
- *By the same token, changes of location and special effects (like disappearing, flying, etc.) are easier to achieve in film than in a live stage performance.*
- *A theater audience that will readily accept a one-interior-setting stage play will generally feel claustrophobic viewing a full movie in a single interior setting.*

b. Which are motivated by other needs or desires? What are these other needs and desires?

Answers can include:

- *Availability of (and cost of securing) performers and locations;*
- *Popularity of original (and readers'/audience's) expectations for the adaptation.*

2. Would it be honest to say that viewing the film is the equivalent of reading/viewing the original novel/stage play? Why or why not?

For this question, the “why or why not” is much more important than the evaluation. Answers must yield evidence that the students did indeed read and understand the original and view and understand the adaptation. Reasons also need to show an understanding of the issues relevant to this activity: demands of the genre, commercial concerns, social/political concerns, etc.

3. Having read/viewed the original, to what extent do you agree with the filmmaker's overall interpretation? Why?

Again, the key to a successful answer is the extent to which the student can elaborate on his or her evaluation with an accurate understanding of the literature and the issues surrounding adaptation.

- What, in your view, does the filmmaker get right?
- What, in your view, does the filmmaker get utterly wrong?
- Did the filmmaker make any purely gratuitous changes—unnecessary changes merely for the sake of change? Why were these changes unnecessary?
- Was there anything in the original that the filmmaker should have changed but didn't? Why should these elements have been changed?

4. Do you prefer the original or the adaptation? Why?

Again, an articulate and insightful "why" is much more important than a statement of mere personal preference. Reasons should fall along the lines of:

- *disappointment with how a character is portrayed;*
- *disappointment with changes to the plot;*
- *agreement (or disagreement) with shifts in focus or interpretation;*
- *etc.*

5. Regardless of your opinion of either the original or the adaptation, to what extent is the adaptation an honest representation of the original? Why?

Same as above, the "why" is where the student demonstrates his or her understanding of the topic at hand. Reasons need to include an understanding of the original author's intent, reasons for any changes the adaptor may have made, etc.



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Materials

General Information question sheets (1 per student).....	6
Surface Comparison question sheets (1 per student).....	7-8
Surface Comparison Chart—student (1 per student).....	9
Surface Comparison Chart—model (1 per student)	10
Summary and Review Chart—student (1 per student).....	11
Summary and Review Chart —model (students may need multiple copies).....	12

General Information:

NOTE: questions that apply specifically to a stage play to film adaptation are underscored and italicized.

When was the novel first published?

When was the stage play first performed in public?

Who was the novel's or play's primary intended audience? (Consider age, gender, socio-economic class, etc.)

When was this particular film adaptation released? (If you are comparing an original with more than one adaptation, consider when each adaptation was released.)

Who was the film adaptation's primary intended audience? (Consider age, gender, socio-economic class, etc.)

What was the original medium of the adaptation (e.g., stage revival, theatrical film, television, etc.)?

Is the film intended to be a recorded performance of the original play?

Demands of Medium and Genre

What narrative possibilities are available to a novelist that are not available—or present a challenge—to the filmmaker?

What narrative possibilities are available to a playwright that are not available—or present a challenge—to the filmmaker?

What narrative possibilities are available to a filmmaker that are impossible or extremely challenging to the novelist?

What narrative possibilities are available to a filmmaker that are impossible or extremely challenging to the playwright?

Surface Comparisons:

NOTE: questions that apply specifically to a stage play to film adaptation are underscored and italicized.

Plot

Are there any events that occur in the original but are not included in the adaptation?

Are any notable events added to the adaptation?

Are there any time alterations from the original to the adaptation?

- Are events that occur separately in the original condensed or conflated?
- Are any periods of time condensed?
- Are any periods of time prolonged or expanded?
- Are there any changes in sequence or in the chronology of events?

Settings

To what extent does the filmmaker maintain the geographical and historical setting(s) of the original?

- Are there any changes in the geographical place(s) in which the original is set?
- Are there any changes in the time period(s) in which the original is set?
- Does the filmmaker add, delete, or change the location of any of the original's action?

To what extent does the appearance of the setting(s) in the adaptation adhere to the author's descriptions in the original?

To what extent are the settings of the adaptation more detailed or graphic than those of the play?

Characters and Characterization:

Are there any instances in which the identities and/or roles of two or more characters are combined into a single character?

Are there any characters in the original who do not appear in the adaptation?

Are there any characters in the adaptation who do not appear in the original?

Does the filmmaker make any alterations to characters' ages? genders? etc.

Does the filmmaker make any alterations to characters' personalities or background?

To what extent do the characters' physical appearances match the author's or playwright's descriptions in the original?

Theme or Central Idea:

To what extent does the filmmaker maintain the theme or central idea of the original?

- Are there any notable shifts in interpretive focus (e.g., feminist, Marxist, archetypal, etc.) from the original to the adaptation?

- Does the filmmaker downplay, alter, or delete a philosophical or political theme that is present in the original?

- Does the filmmaker emphasize, highlight, or add a philosophical or political theme not present in the original?

Overall Mood or Atmosphere:

Are both the original and the adaptation equally comic? tragic? suspenseful?

Does the adaptation evoke an emotional or psychological response similar to the original?

STEP 1: Surface Comparisons: STUDENT

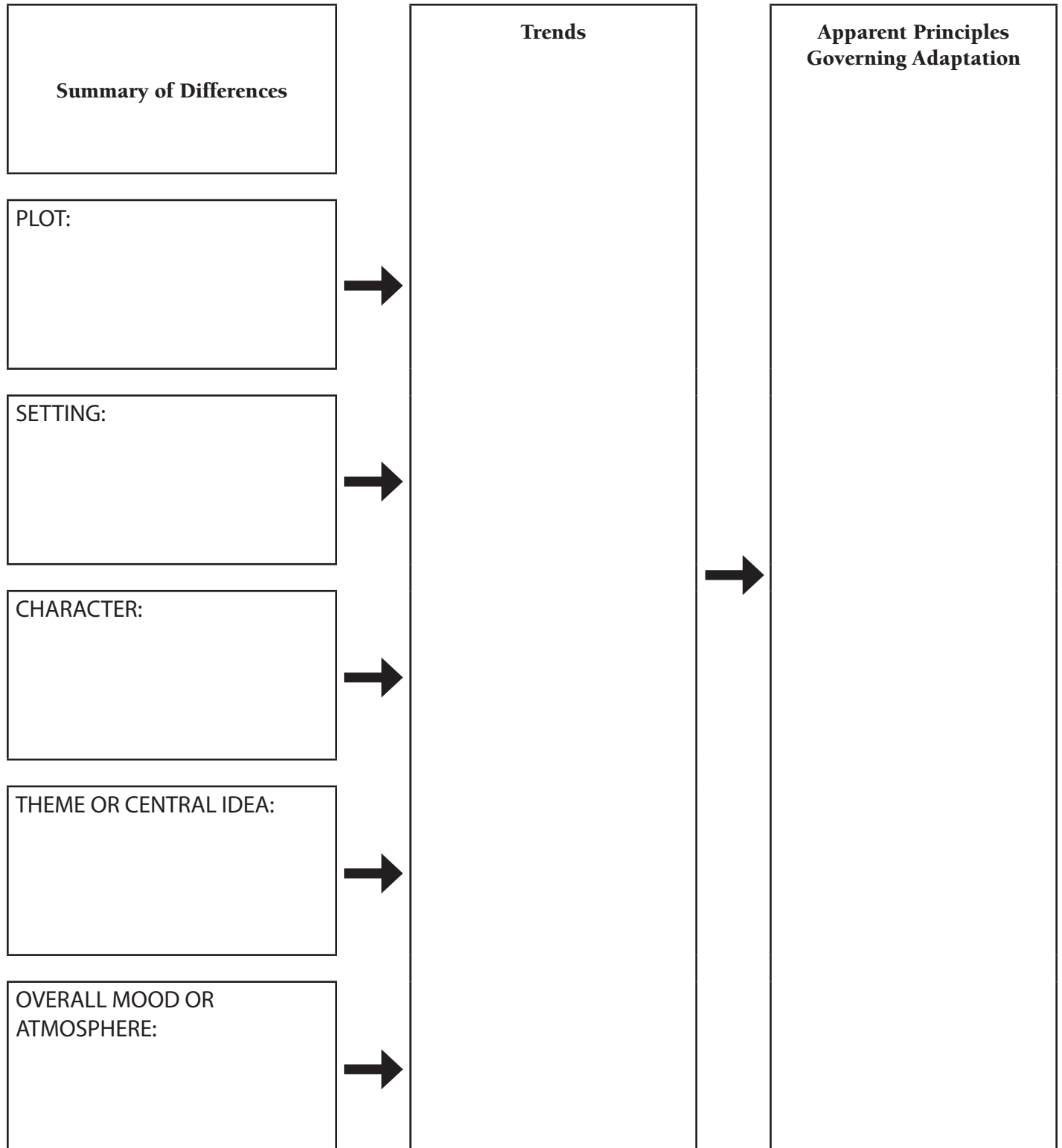
	Treatment in Novel	Treatment in Adaptation

STEP 1: Surface Comparisons: MODEL

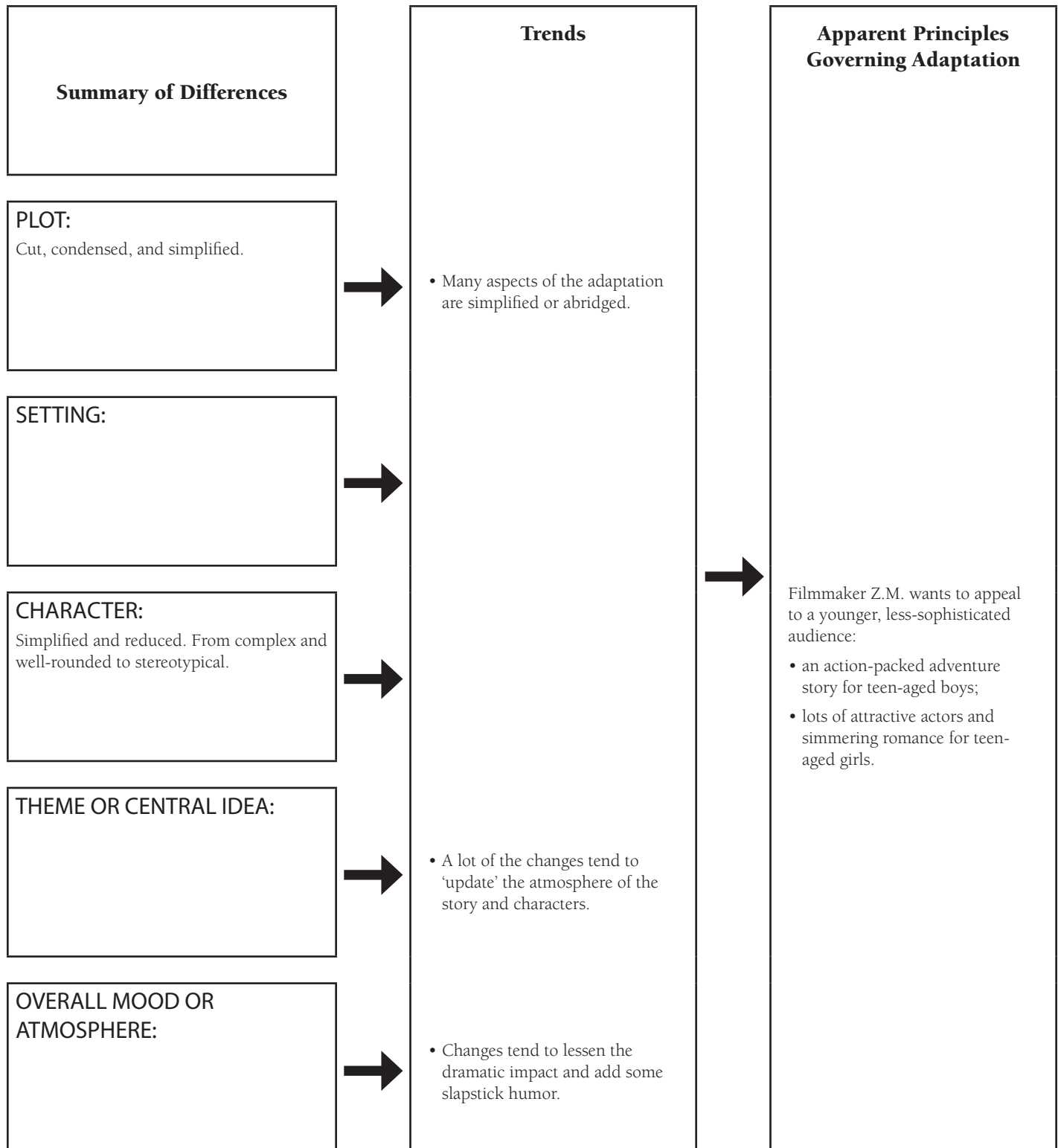
Characters	Treatment in Novel	Treatment in Adaptation
Number of Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each chapter is dedicated to the narrator's interactions with a different character. There are 15 chapters, and 15 important characters in addition to the narrator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 15 characters are reduced to 5. They are shown all together; there is not shift in focus from one to the next.
Sidekick and Confidante	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In book he has long phone conversations with his wife who is back on Long Island. He quotes these extensively, filling whole pages with their talk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No wife and no phone conversations. He is traveling with a girlfriend who plays a much bigger role in the actual action of the story.
Narrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes himself as "middle-aged, fat, and bald" 	Played by heartthrob S.V. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are hints that he is just out of graduate school is athletic and a womanizer.
Wallace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> are evil. "hero" and K.W. the stereotypical villain. One-dimensional character motivated solely by greed No conscience.
Extras/Townpeople	Characters include representatives from different classes and groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Billy, Conrad, and Zippy at the Lazy Susan. Maude and Leila from the church charitable society. Several jurors from each trial. 	Number of characters and their roles are severely reduced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Lazy Susan. Three men are condensed into "Clyde." Maude and Leila have been eliminated. Only one juror has spoken lines.

Make as many copies of this graphic as you need. This model provides examples of the type of information students assigned to the "Character" group might note.

STEP 2: Summary and Review: STUDENT



STEP 2: Summary and Review: MODEL



Homework:

Drawing on the information and ideas you gathered during this activity—or generating new material by comparing another film adaptation with its original text—write an essay in which you support, refute, or qualify the following thesis:

Despite the necessary changes any filmmaker would have to make when adapting a classic novel [stage play] for a major motion picture production, _____ is a completely honest representation of the novel [play] on which it is based.

Standards:

Common Core State Standards - Reading: Literature

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7

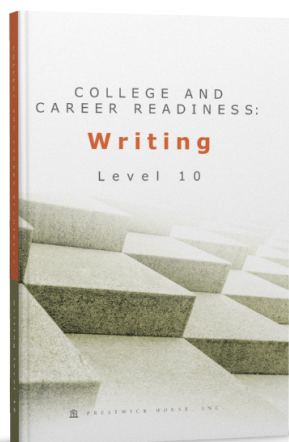
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Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

High School English Language Arts and Reading

110.49 (b) Visual Media Analysis and Production

**Sources:**

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