

In element of
characterization, the
dramatist can create



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In order to successfully create drama, it is crucial for the dramatist to captivate his audience in the play whether they want to be involved or not. Within drama, the majority of the audience are ordinary people and it is fully up to the dramatist to get these people involved and interested in following the story. The first approach the dramatist can take in forming a solid connection with the audience is through the development of tension and suspense in the performance as it parallels the advancement of the plot. Utilizing the element of characterization, the dramatist can create develop reliable individuals with whom the audience can both relate to and sometimes sympathize with. The last element of a play which the dramatist can manipulate in order to get the audience involved in the play is by working with the setting to create a desired mood or atmosphere in which the audience would feel more involved in the story. It is through methods such as these which dramatists depend on in order to successfully “ place ordinary people in situations of crisis”.

In the plays *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and *Hamlet*, Shakespeare and Stoppard creatively immerse the audience in situations of crisis through the use of conflict, characterization, and setting. Crisis does not necessarily refer to conflict but rather to a person’s reaction to such a tense or suspenseful situation. In the play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Stoppard creates conflict within the co-protagonists through the theme of fate and free will as well as through the topic of death.

The theme of fate is first introduced at the start of the play through the event of the coin tosses coming up as “ heads”. Not only does this unusual event cause *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* to suggest that the laws of

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probability have been suspended but more importantly serves to demonstrate the way fate operates in the play. Whenever Rosencrantz and Guildenstern manage to get out of the action of the Hamlet storyline, they are keen to acknowledge their lack of identity and desire gain a better understanding of the world. However, in these times the pair often find themselves bored and without the motivation to take the proper action to answer their self-doubts. This close relationship between Stoppard's play and the topic of fate allows the audience to make connections between their lives and those of the co-protagonists as they question to what extent fate and free will holds control over their own lives? A second method in which Stoppard is able to better create a connection between the audience and the co-protagonists from the play is through the discussion of death and its representation in art. One of the main characters, Guildenstern, sees death as the negative, as something humans are incapable of understanding. As a result, he unable to capture that his own actions directly leading towards his untimely death. In contrast, the Player thinks that no one can tell the difference between an acted death and a real one and decides to give his audiences the sort of thrill and entertainment they seek.

A character's response to conflict – whether it be internal or external – takes center stage in theater. In the play Hamlet, Shakespeare focuses on themes of appearance versus reality, honor and revenge, spying and deceit and in doing so attacks humanity's moral nature. In order to explore these themes Shakespeare utilizes numerous forms of conflict; the most predominant being the external conflict between Hamlet and Claudius. After learning that Claudius murdered his father, Hamlet feels a responsibility to avenge his

father's murder by killing Claudius as well, however, Claudius soon realizes Hamlet's intention and makes plans of his own to get rid of him. In Hamlet, it is easy to identify the antagonist - Claudius - however, this is not so much the case in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, it can be assumed that Hamlet is the closest to being the antagonist since in the last act he replaced his own name in the letter with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern later causing them to be executed. Though it is likely that Hamlet never felt any true "evil" motives towards Rosencrantz and Guildenstern but rather used them as expendable beings who so happen to be at his disposal at just the right time. This situation allows for the audience to become immersed in the play as they are left to ponder Hamlet's decision and judge whether he truly is the antagonist as well as consider what they would have done in a similar situation.

Considering both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's involvement in Shakespeare's Hamlet their presences weren't very notable and the pair was easily forgotten whenever they were not the story's direct attention. In addition, in the original version of the play, Hamlet expressed much more frustration and distrust towards Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to the point where the pair could even be considered minor antagonists since their main job was to assist Claudius by spying on Hamlet. Comparing these details regarding Rosencrantz and Guildenstern back to Stoppard's work, the audience is not as easily able to view the pair as antagonists but instead seem to have more sympathy because they - the audience - have insight of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's thoughts and understand that neither of the two has control over their current situation. Within their works both Stoppard

and Shakespeare are successful in immersing the audience in situations of crisis through the use of literary devices such as conflict, characterization, and setting.

The idea of the audience is far more than just spectators but also having roles just as important to those of actors is proven through the dramatists' attempts to promote the process of perception and engagement by making the performance/text as visually and aurally comprehensible to the public. Not only is the audience's primary job to encourage the actors through their appreciation and applause, but the audience also acts as a meter for public opinion about the play. Therefore, when writing *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and *Hamlet* it was crucial for both Stoppard and Shakespeare to shape balanced performances in order to generate their desired response - a strong dynamic between audience and those on stage. The more the audience can connect to these works, the better they can learn and take away from the tragedies and their characters.