

Hamlet: women of the shakespearean era

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



Hamlet: Women of the Shakespearean Era Women in Shakespeare's plays are, for the most part, looked at as weak characters. There were only two main female roles in his famous play Hamlet. The two female roles in the play are Queen Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, and Ophelia, Hamlet's love and daughter of Polonius. These women are always being told what to say and do. They never speak up for themselves, and that creates trouble for them in the end. In William Shakespeare's play, The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark the women are manipulated by the men, which causes Gertrude and Ophelia to die tragically. The double standards for women in this play are extremely common and many men everywhere use them. For example, the double standard that men can sleep around and women cannot. Laertes tells Ophelia that she should not give up her innocence to Hamlet because he has not saved himself for her and their love is not real, yet Laertes is not pure himself. This is kind of a 'do as I say, not as I do' type of situation. Most double standards demonstrate that, males can do whatever they please and females get in trouble for most things. To be more specific, Gertrude and Ophelia were both told to talk to Hamlet so Polonius and Claudius could listen in and find out certain things about Hamlet. Ophelia was even forced to reject Hamlet when she loved him. Also, the women in the play are not free to marry whoever they desire. For example, when Gertrude married Claudius it was not really her choice to do so. The first time they disobey the men in this story is when things start to go bad. Ophelia ends up going crazy and drowning, and Gertrude drinks from a poisoned cup of wine and dies. David Bevington had quite a few things to say on the female roles in this play. He refers to Ophelia and Gertrude as "instruments through which

Claudius attempts to spy on Hamlet" (Bevington 301). This is true because they listen to Claudius and do whatever he asks of them. Also, he says that Hamlet makes it known that the women are weak. Hamlet says, " frailty, thy name is woman" (I. ii. 146). This play shows that women have a manipulative side to them. Many forms of trickery occurred to Hamlet when he had not done anything wrong to the women. Ophelia makes it seem like she does not love Hamlet and gives him back his love letters to her at one point in the play. This entire play is just pure madness from the beginning all the way till the last act and scene. The females get caught up in the middle of the drama, and that is why they have the bad reputation we have. Joseph Campbell described to us in an interview about why women are portrayed how they are. He says that women have been seen as weak since the beginning of time. Most of the time it is because women are smaller and more fragile than the men are. You never see women doing anything for themselves, and if you do it is on a rare occasion. That is why women are portrayed and treated how they are. Work Cited Bevington, David. " Introduction to Hamlet. " Hamlet. William Shakespeare. Evanston: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1992. 301. Print. Campbell, Joseph. " The Hero's Adventure. " The Power of Myth. Interview by Bill Moyers. Wellspring Media, Inc., 2005. DVD. Shakespeare, William. Hamlet. Evanston: McDougal little, 1997. Print.