

Hamlet and his madness as a psychoanalytical depiction

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



The play Hamlet by Shakespeare portrays many themes and a psychoanalytical depiction of the underlying issues within the protagonist. Shakespeare showcases issues such as evoked emotions of losing a family member and revenge which led to the eventual “madness” of Hamlet. The in-depth analysis of the Shakespearean tragedy examines revenge, the patriarchal hierarchy of society, corruption, foils between the characters, and the deeper psychoanalytical meaning of Hamlet’s internal feelings.

Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, is disgusted by the remarriage of his mother, Queen Gertrude, and his Uncle Claudius shortly after the passing of Hamlet’s father. The ghost of King Hamlet encounters Hamlet and brings forth the truth about the death of himself, murdered by his brother. Hamlet’s goes through the journey of seeking out the truth and avenge his father’s death. It is apparent Hamlet’s indecisiveness of whether it’s better to act or let nature take its course in seeking revenge on Claudius but feels as though it is his duty to seek righteousness. Hamlet is constantly in doubt of his own actions and has an ongoing internal battle against his own feelings. His internal struggles and apparent madness brings forth worries from Claudius and Gertrude. They seek help from Hamlet’s friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to watch over Hamlet’s well being. Hamlet also pronounces his love for Ophelia which can be seen as on and off throughout the play resulting in the question of whether he loves her or not. Hamlet’s facade of madness allows him to inquire about the truth about Claudius and King Hamlet’s death. The journey in seeking the truth causes the death of many main characters in the novel including Claudius, Gertrude, Hamlet, Ophelia, Polonius, Laertes, and Hamlet himself.

Revenge is an emotion easily rationalized and has a strong driven force in the plot of Hamlet. Hamlet's contemplation of whether to take action of revenge or not appears throughout the text. He struggles with the internal battle and spends most of the play dwelling on what to do rather than exacting revenge. The theme of revenge through Hamlet is relevant through Hamlet's aim to avenge his father's killer and Laertes' aim to avenge Hamlet. " It has a ghost who demands revenge for a murder and a hero who promises to achieve it, pretend to be mad, indulges in philosophic soliloquies, and does not succeed in this purpose till the end of five acts. (Bell 31)" Hamlet's thirst for revenge is blinded by his anger and resentment towards Claudius and rather lacks reason. As a philosophical mind, Hamlet must seek out the truth behind the murder before taking action. Due to Hamlet's conscious mind, revenge doesn't take place, and it's delayed until at the end of the five acts. Bell states, " It is Laertes' drive to avenge the death of his father Polonius, which takes the action to its finish. (Bell 32)" Laertes returns to Denmark to take responsibility for the death of Polonius however, he encounters the situation in an irresponsible way. Unable to act in a rational way, Laertes gets manipulated by Claudius into dueling with Hamlet. Claudius takes advantage of Laertes' determination for avenging his father's death and his violence towards Hamlet in hopes to have Laertes kill Hamlet.

The line between madness and sanity is drawn at a blur in Hamlet. Hamlet and Ophelia's display of symptoms of madness differs drastically. Hamlet's madness is seen as an act yet Ophelia's eventual madness is genuine.

Hamlet's madness was falsified to lure out the truth about his father's murder. On the other hand, Ophelia's madness springs from the combination of her father's death, her mother's neglect, and the lack of love from Hamlet.

Ophelia's character embodies both grief and madness in the play. She is portrayed as weak and unable to have a sense of individuality. Her characteristics are stated to be, "the girl experienced much grief, which her fragile mind could not bear, and so she goes mad. (Hamada 60)" She experiences her vast amount of pain from the loss of male influences in her life which causes her inner pain to eventually drive her to madness. Hamada states, "Ophelia drowned in the brook because of madness. Unable to bear the loss of her true love, Hamlet, who has deserted her, and reeling from the death of her father, she becomes mad. (Hamada 60)" The death of Polonius causes her to lose a major part of herself and is shattered from the grief which she never recovers from. Laertes and Polonius warns and indicates to Ophelia that her feelings for Hamlet are easily persuaded and she should not trust his affections towards her. She finds hope and regards Hamlet's madness as a symbol of madness is for love. Disregarding their advice, Ophelia's further official drive to madness was fueled by her sexual and love frustration with Hamlet. Hamlet's indecisiveness of his feelings for Ophelia takes a toll on her insanity. She is left heartbroken after Hamlet neglects his love for her in hopes to seek revenge for his father instead.

The greed and thirst for power are inevitable for the downfall of Denmark. "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark," marks the portrayal of the shattering of Denmark's social order under the power of King Claudius.

Claudius's thirst for power leads to his eventual murder of his own brother. The unnatural coronation proves to be the reason for a poisoned Denmark. Not only does Claudius take the throne the unright way, but he also seeks help in others to ensure his throne in Denmark. " Claudius sends a series substitutes to uphold his part of the duel. We have Hamlet against Polonius, Hamlet against Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet against Ophelia, and Hamlet against Gertrude. (Foreman 73)".