

Example of essay on the spirit that i have seen

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



Is Hamlet an idealist or not?

Many classic tragedies by William Shakespeare often present the main character as a protagonist with a vivid flaw that usually results in his posterior downfall. So there is no surprise that Hamlet, the main character of the tragedy with the same title is no exception from this trend. Hamlet is an idealist and his moral idealism makes him vulnerable and ignorant to the surrounding society. As opposed to his inner world this society is far from being ideal. This contradiction causes the inevitable demise of the main character.

Royal Shakespeare Company states that “ The mood of the “ Hamlet” is set by its opening exchange: “ Who is there?” “ Nay, answer me” (Royal Shakespeare Company, p. 1)

All the people around Hamlet act in a deceitful manner so that to gain all the possible prestige and personal profits. These people act according to their selfish desires. Hamlet is opposed to them, being an honest person with high moral qualities and values. Shakespeare develops the theme of discrepancy. Hamlet is trapped within the borders of behavior of this deceitful society. He faces the dilemma: either to correspond to their standards of behavior and humiliate himself, or to remain true to his own ideals of strong moral and to oppose himself to the whole society. And he chooses high morality.

It is difficult for Hamlet to make a simple decision of killing the murderer of his father. His feelings and severe grief about his father’s unfair death kills Hamlet from inside and does not let him make the necessary decision.

Gertrude and Claudius do not understand why this grief is so long. They try

to persuade Hamlet to let the grief go away, and Hamlet in his turn cannot understand their point of view. He cannot just ignore his tragedy and loss. After he discovers what he should do to avenge the death of his father, he becomes somewhat distraught. His moral principles do not afford him to take the other person's life. Soon after the first conversation with the Ghost of his father Hamlet makes an immediate decision to perform revenge and punish the murderer. He already dwells upon the plan how to catch Claudius. However, after a while, he shows to the society that he is a person he used to be. It makes him a deceitful person with hidden true feelings while he tries to decide what to do. The Ghost comes again and it happens so that Hamlet is already not so sure about his future actions. He has come to other thoughts:

May be the devil: and the devil hath power

Out of my weakness and my melancholy,

As he is very potent with such spirits,—

Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds

More relative than this.—the play's the thing

Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

(Shakespeare)

Claudius in his turn has no remorse or second thoughts about who “ the devil” is. He understands that he committed the sin of fratricide, horrendous for the Christian society. However, he is happy about the fact that he managed to trick the whole Elsinore into believing that he is a good and fair king. He enjoys all the pleasures of being a king and that he committed the

terrible crime that brought him so much pleasure. Meanwhile he has nothing to do but “ smile, and smile, and be a villain”. (Shakespeare) So, Hamlet has to choose whether to kill a “ good” king and make the society lose another ruler they love so that to avenge the death of his father, or to leave everything as it is, but to break the given promise.

Being a strong idealist Hamlet naively believes that if he kills Claudius during his pray, Claudius’ soul will go to Heaven and the murderer will avoid going to Hell. However, his enemy is far from being that naïve and childish: “ My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: / Words without thoughts never to heaven go”. (Shakespeare) But Hamlet sticks to his moral values and false ideals so much that the idea of insincere pray is something unbelievable for him.

Here is the “ later 19th century’s extension of Goethe’s pure-souled Hamlet: “ His ideal presented a man whose nature is everything lovable; who is placed upon a pinnacle of earthly greatness; who is afflicted with a grief that breaks his heart and a shock that disorders his mind”. (Rosenberg, p. 110) Martin Scofield fairly inquires: “ what is Hamlet ‘ really’, if different ages and different critics within each age have seen it so differently?” (Scofield, p. 3) Not all critics agree to the idea that Hamlet is an ideal character. Crystal Downing in “ Reading Hamlet” stated that “ Laurence Olivier begins his 1948 film adaptation of Hamlet with a voice-over stating, “ This is the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind”. (Downing, p. 185) This understanding of the play has already become a cliché. Hamlet seems to be unable to take an action, even when his father’s ghost tells him to avenge. Not only does he hesitate to kill his father’s murderer Claudius, he also demonstrates his

hesitation in world's famous monologue "To be, or not to be" (3. 1. 56).

However, this soliloquy has various interpretations, so there is not enough evidence to claim that Hamlet is not the ideal character.

In the end Hamlet is literary destroyed by the contradiction between the evil, unfair, mean and corrupted society from one side and his idealistic views on the world and the people that surround him on the other side. Unfortunately, if the other characters of the tragedy had treated Hamlet as loyally and fair as he treated them, Hamlet would have had the possibility to pursue the idealistic views he had. However, there is some irony in the fact that he made a great contribution to his self-destruction. It was his false and erroneous sense of invincibility which made him believe that he totally controlled the situation regardless of the circumstances. The corruption of the society in the kingdom slowly became the cause of deterioration of Hamlet's weak mind. Hamlet was left in anguish that made him desire to fulfill the wishes of his own and his dead father's. The madness of the main character that once was made-up at last became real. Throughout the whole tragedy the main character was a constant object for deceit by his king and his own friends. But being the true idealist he was the only one who was loyal to his father and at the same time the only one who suffered most from his peers' betrayal.

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