

Hamlet revenge: a chain reaction

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



Hamlet Revenge: A Chain Reaction In the play Hamlet, by William Shakespeare, the theme of revenge is repeated numerous times throughout the play and involves a great deal of characters. Of these characters, eight are dead by the end of the play by result of murder which was initiated through revenge. Shakespeare uses the revenge theme to create conflict among many characters. Shakespeare uses the revenge theme to create conflict between Hamlet and Claudius. In Act I, scene 5, Hamlet is visited by the ghost who was his father. The ghost makes Hamlet aware of his murderous death when he tells Hamlet of how Claudius had killed him. The ghost says this to Hamlet regarding Claudius, " Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder." This is where Hamlet is first introduced to the revenge plot between himself and Claudius. Hamlet wants to insure that the ghost really was his dead father before he kills Claudius. To do this Hamlet has people act out the death of his father in front of Claudius and declares him guilty by his reaction to the play. " O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound." Hamlet declares Claudius' guilt to Horatio and now realizes that he must continue on with his revenge plot. The conflict between Hamlet and Claudius is delayed by Hamlet but does eventually occur in the last scene. Hamlet's mother has just died, Hamlet has been sliced by Laertes' poison sword, and Hamlet has just struck Laertes with a fatal blow when Laertes says that this was all brought on by Claudius. Hamlet, now realizing that there is no more time for him to delay his revenge, stabs Claudius and kills him. Revenge was the motive for the conflict between Hamlet and Claudius. Shakespeare uses the revenge plot to create conflict between Laertes and Hamlet by having Laertes avenge his father's and

sister's death which Hamlet is responsible for. After learning of his father's unnatural death, Hamlet decides that he can no longer trust anyone, except for Horatio. While acting out his madness, he visited Ophelia and cut off his ties with her because of his distrust for everyone. In Act III, when Hamlet talks with his mother, he notices that he is being spied upon. Thinking that it is the king, Hamlet mistakenly kills Polonius who was hiding behind a big rug, which for some medieval reason, was hung on the wall. It is believed Ophelia herself went mad because of Hamlet's rude and violent treatment of her and also because Hamlet killed her father. In Act IV Ophelia's madness drives her to walk into the river and drown. When Laertes arrives back from France he has heard the horrible news and says, "And so have I a noble father lost; A sister driven into desperate terms, Whose worth, if praises may go back again, Stood challenger on mount of all the age For her perfections: but my revenge will come." (4. 7. 25-29) Laertes is plotting revenge against the murderer of his father and sister, Hamlet. Claudius asks Laertes, "What would you undertake, To show yourself in deed your father's son, More than in words?" Claudius and Laertes come to the conclusion that they will hold a sword duel between Hamlet and Laertes. Laertes will have poison on his sword and Claudius will have a glass with poison in it ready for Hamlet to quench his thirst. During the duel, Hamlet is scratched by the poison-tipped sword of Laertes. It is now inevitable that Hamlet will die. Therefore, the conflict between Laertes and Hamlet has resulted in revenge for Laertes. Through the revenge theme, Shakespeare creates an interior conflict between Hamlet and himself. In Hamlet's first soliloquy, Hamlet displays his melancholy state of being and his unwillingness to live. "Or that the

Everlasting had not fix'd His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!" Hamlet states that if God was not against suicide then he would take his own life. In Hamlet's second soliloquy, after the meeting with his father's ghost, he beats himself up by saying, " Am I a coward...?", and, " I am pigeon-liver'd, and lack gall". Hamlet wants revenge at this time but he is questioning his willingness to kill Claudius, so he is calling himself a coward. Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave, That I, the son of a dear father murder'd, Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell, Must like a whore unpack my heart with words, (2. 2. 584-588) The greatest interior conflict between Hamlet and himself occurs when Hamlet delays the killing of Claudius. Hamlet carefully examines the need to avenge his father's death: A villain kills my father, and for that, I, his sole son, do this same villain send To heaven. O, this is hire and salary, not revenge. (3. 4. 76-79) Delaying at this point is Hamlet's tragic flaw. The conflict between Hamlet and himself is resolved when Hamlet kills Claudius because he himself was going to die soon and had little time left. Therefore, the interior conflict between Hamlet and himself, was created by the revenge plot.