

Hamlet key relationships

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



Hamlet and key relationships In Shakespeare's tragedy Hamlet, the Shakespearian hero is undoubtedly the most compelling character. He is dynamic, complex and, through his soliloquies, we are provided with most of the thematic content in Hamlet. However, it is not just Hamlet's soliloquies that develop his character and establish the thematic content; the secondary characters that surround him, and, more his relationships and interactions with them provide us with just as much to digest as Hamlet's private meditations. Hamlet and Laertes mirror each other in many important ways, creating a complex thematic scene and establishing a parallel story with interesting implications; Hamlet's choices concerning his mother, as well as the dialogue that the two of them engage in, constitute a veritable hero-test, demonstrating the strength of Hamlet's virtue; Hamlet's actions and words with respect to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern represent a significant arc for Hamlet, and his eventual plotting to kill them speaks volumes about a crucial part of his character. We also perceive brave Hamlet's relentless search for reality uncovering and unveiling the countless number of questions trapped inside him. This shows the struggle displays the power of Claudius and the unmistakable sense of manipulation in his character. I think the most important character to consider when dissecting Hamlet is Hamlet's chosen confidant and dearest friend Horatio. Hamlet trusts Horatio implicitly; he confides in Horatio and exalts him as "e'en as just a man / As e'er my conversation coped withal". Knowing the reasons why Hamlet holds Horatio in such high regard provides much insight into Hamlet himself. However, it is not just the illumination of Hamlet that is Horatio's function: only by virtue of Horatio's apparent believability is the audience persuaded to swallow the

many surreal and/or ridiculous occurrences in Hamlet and appreciate its power. By examining Horatio's relationship with Hamlet and the reason for its strength as well as evaluating Hamlet's choices from Horatio's perspective, we can learn a great deal about Hamlet as a character and appreciate more fully the tragedy and the power of the tragedy. In order to understand Hamlet and its hero through Horatio, you must first explore Horatio's character and ascertain his function in the play. Horatio is first brought into the plot because of his awareness and his extensive education: the guards call on him, as a scholar, to address the ghost that they have encountered. Immediately upon his introduction, Horatio demonstrates that he is a discerning and intelligent man. By virtue of this, Horatio plays a crucial role in Hamlet: he acts as the anchor of reason in a plot rife with madness and the absurd, and provides a sound and reasonable perspective; indeed, he could even be described as the acceptable figure. Even from the first act, Horatio acts as a "calculator" of truth for the audience, providing a reference for discerning the authenticity of events in the plot and the quality of choices made by Hamlet. After seeing the ghost for the first time, Horatio makes a clever comment that sets the tone for the rest of the play: "This bodes some strange eruption to our state. In this quotation, he assumes the role of "he that knows", an identity that constitutes an important part of his relationship with Hamlet and the basis of his importance in Hamlet. In keeping with his purpose in the play, Horatio makes it clear when Hamlet is making a choice that is ill-advised, and even illuminates the negative implications of the choice. There are two very significant examples of this, both occurring at moments when Hamlet's choice will have an enormous

effect on Hamlet's fortunes. Horatio's role in Hamlet is of great importance to the power of the play and to the fullness of Hamlet's character. As an extension of the unique and commendable traits that Horatio displays, he functions in a manner essential to the audience's understanding and appreciation of the basic plot and the complex thematic messages of the play. In many ways, Horatio functions as Shakespeare's secret weapon in Hamlet: when Shakespeare wants to clearly communicate the truth of the matter or frame an issue from a particular perspective, he employs Horatio's "calculations" to do so. Furthermore, Hamlet's admiration of Horatio reveals to us those facets which Hamlet considers of most important in a man. It is Horatio who makes Hamlet who he is, and it is Horatio who makes Hamlet into the powerful tragedy it has proven itself to be. Claudius, is both intelligent and well-spoken, two traits that, put together, complement his manipulative and dangerous nature. In fact though, it is his conscience that makes Claudius such a complex villain. Despite his rise to power seeming to have been carefully planned and executed, he nevertheless encountered certain things that he did not expect, such as the appearance of the ghost of his victim that ignited Hamlet's thirst for revenge. I see Hamlet and Claudius' unjustified relationship as a somewhat "mystery". It is quite interesting to really consider what each of the characters knows, and doesn't know about what the other. An example of this is the occasion when Hamlet finds the truth about the treacherous murder of his father but Claudius doesn't have any idea that, that is the motif creating the madness in his head. In Act 1 Scene 2 Claudius prepares a speech in order to try and get Hamlet to cease him from bringing up his father, most likely fearing that the

more discourse there was about the old king, or remembered, the more likely people were to delve deeper into his death. It is quite understandable that he wanted Hamlet to move on quickly. This speech seems attentively planned out, as if Claudius had written it out before he delivered it. Hamlet had most likely been lamenting his father's death for quite some time now, so Claudius had ample time to compose the speech. It is unclear how much time passes between this point and when Hamlet puts on the play intended to catch Claudius in her guilt. He brings the question of time up to Ophelia beforehand, " For look you how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within's two hours". But Ophelia comments, " Nay, tis' twice two months, my lord". The most notable aspect of the speech is Claudius's repetition of the word " To" at the beginning of lines 87, 91 and 102. The first two uses of " to" are infinitive, an impersonal construct distancing himself from the death of the prior king. The use of an infinitive also lends an emotionless aspect to his words, saying get over it, I already have. The " To" in line 102 is a preposition, introducing the absurdity of faulting heaven, by mourning his father. He is trying to manipulate Hamlet to move forward, away from his father's death. While this speech is given to Hamlet, it is for the benefit of Gertrude, who is instrumental and vital in handling the emotional Hamlet. After all, it is she who convinces Hamlet not to go Wittenberg, showing how well Claudius is able to manipulate people, even the ones he claims to love. It is successful in both getting Hamlet not to act, but keeps him from traveling to Wittenberg. What he does not count on is his victim's ghost igniting Hamlet's thirst for revenge. Claudius' sneaky and manipulative ways eventually lead to the death of Polonius at Hamlet's

hands. Instead of punishing Hamlet for Polonius' murder himself, Claudius sent the prince to England alongside Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with letters that would arrange Hamlet's death, making it look like an accident. You are lead to believe he is having someone else do the dirty work to save the Queen's feelings, but I think it had just as much to do with politics. Hamlet was well liked by the people, for reasons we are not aware of, and his punishment could lead the people to rally around him and rise up against the King. Claudius' plans fall apart when Hamlet alters the letters himself, having Rosencrantz and Guildenstern executed in his place. Horatio and Claudius are significant contributors to the ever-changing mind of Hamlets. Both characters pass onto Hamlet something that is desired for and something that isn't, so therefore Hamlet is stuck and trapped in a situation or place he does not long to be in. Power and friendship both influence Hamlet greatly in his decisions throughout the tragedy making him the fated character Shakespeare intended him to be. Robbin Reza