

# An analytical essay of william shakespeare's the tragedy of hamlet, prince of den...

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



An Analytical Essay of William Shakespeare's The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark Chad Lewis Nancy V. Bolinger 11 Dec 2006 Lit-Based Research/ENG 113 Essay # 5 Originally titled The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke, this tragedy has been reproduced more times than any other play written by William Shakespeare (en. wikipedia. org 1 of 9). Prince Hamlet also has the lengthiest appearance of any character in all of Shakespeare's plays (en. wikipedia. org 6 of 9). In the play, Prince Hamlet is caught between balancing his need to avenge his father's death, dealing with the disgust he felt for Gertrude and Claudius' love affair, and maintaining the relationship he has with Ophelia without exposing his plans to kill his uncle Claudius for the murder of King Hamlet. During the first act, Prince Hamlet meets the ghost of his father, King Hamlet. His father's ghost tells Hamlet that Claudius poured poison in his ear while he slept. The spirit also explains that he wishes for Hamlet to avenge his death, but not to punish Queen Gertrude for marrying Claudius. He tells Hamlet that she will have to answer to her conscience, and eventually God for her incestuous actions (absoluteshakespeare. com 1 of 4). It was believed during these times that when a person died, especially in such a tragic fashion, that their spirit lingered about while suffering in Purgatory. This could cause a normally virtuous person's spirit to become filled with malevolence and begin to meddle in living men's affairs (en. wikipedia. org 4 of 9). This belief caused Prince Hamlet to want to investigate his father's spirit's claims to ensure that they were indeed true. In order to do this, Prince Hamlet feigns madness in order to remain hidden from members of the court's suspicions while he plots his revenge on King Claudius (www. sparknotes. com 1 of 3). He also

takes advantage of a group of actors who come to Elsinore Castle to perform by rewriting a play to recreate the scene of his father's murder. He does this with the hope of flushing a confession out of Claudius' guilty conscience. When Claudius sees the play, he stands up and leaves the room (en.wikipedia.org 5 of 9). After many more events, Claudius' guilt becomes more obvious. Claudius then begins to change his focus towards killing Hamlet, as he is beginning to become aware of the Prince's plans to kill him. Claudius then arranges a fencing match between Hamlet and Polonius' son Laertes and has Laertes poison the blade of one of his swords to be used in the match (Hamlet). Hamlet scores the first hit during the match, and Claudius offers Hamlet a congratulatory drink from a goblet of wine that Claudius had previously poisoned without anyone's knowledge. Hamlet declines to drink, but his mother Gertrude accepted the poisoned wine for him. Hamlet is then wounded by Laertes' poison sword and continues the match unaware of his impending death. During the match, Gertrude dies after telling Hamlet that she had been poisoned by Claudius' wine. Hamlet then stabs Claudius through with the poisoned sword and forces him to drink down the rest of the poisoned wine. Claudius dies, and Hamlet dies shortly after finally avenging King Hamlet (www.sparknotes.com 2 of 3). During Hamlet's first soliloquy we learn that he does not approve of King Claudius taking Queen Gertrude as his wife so quickly after King Hamlet's death (absoluteshakespeare.com 1 of 4). Not only did Hamlet disapprove of Claudius' and Gertrude's marriage, but at that time, the Church of England also considered a widow's marriage to her deceased husband's brother to be an incestuous affair (en.wikipedia.org 4 of 9). Queen Gertrude is somewhat saved from Hamlet's lust for

vengeance, as his father's ghost told Hamlet to spare her from persecution for her actions. However, this does not stop Hamlet from verbally berating her from time to time throughout the play. Hamlet does not understand his mother's need for protection and comfort, and this hurts him. He feels that her marriage to Claudius so quickly after King Hamlet's death dishonors his father's memory (Hamlet). Many things helped prevent Ophelia and Hamlet from being able to express their love for each other openly. In Act I, Ophelia's brother Laertes warns Ophelia not to fall in love with Hamlet, as he states she would only be hurt by the relationship (absoluteshakespeare. com 1 of 4). Shortly after this, Ophelia's father Polonius tells her not to show Hamlet any affection, as he is only using her for his own benefit (absoluteshakespeare. com 1 of 4). During the second act, Polonius is told by Ophelia that Hamlet came to her with his clothes ragged, and then he anxiously studied her face and quickly left. Polonius then assumes Hamlet is behaving this way because he is mad with love for Ophelia, and he cannot bear that she is no longer acknowledging Hamlet's love (absoluteshakespeare. com 2 of 4). In Act III, King Claudius and Polonius listen in on a private conversation between Prince Hamlet and Ophelia while hiding out of sight. During the conversation, Hamlet grows suspicious of Ophelia's intentions. He seems to have no love for Ophelia whatsoever when he orders her away to a nunnery and denounces marriage in general (en. wikipedia. org 5 of 9). Prince Hamlet later tries to tell Ophelia that he is only pretending to be mad during the performance being put on by the visiting actors. He hopes that she will be able to wait for him until after he avenges his father's murder. This however, never happens as Ophelia becomes

insane after her father is killed at the hands of Hamlet, and somehow drowns herself shortly thereafter (Hamlet). Throughout this play, Hamlet fully devotes himself to avenging his father's death while trying to hold together the pieces of his life that matter to him. He focuses on holding onto his love for Ophelia while keeping her far enough away from him to protect her from any misguided retribution that might have occurred while he plotted to assassinate King Claudius. At the same time, Hamlet was fighting an inner struggle between his own view of his mother as a frail, needy woman who cares nothing of her own image as long as she has a man to share her bed with, and the order his father gave to him to not seek vengeance upon her for what she had done. In the end, it might have been better for Hamlet had he not tried to seek revenge at all. When he did finally accomplish his goal, he had traded everything he loved for it, including his own life.

Works Cited

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