

Example of hamlet research paper

Literature, William Shakespeare



Hamlet is a tragic play which was written by William Shakespeare. It revolves around Hamlet, a prince who is traumatized by the tragic death of his father, Old King Hamlet. Later, his life totally changes when he is informed by a ghost that his later father did not actually face a natural death, but was murdered by his uncle Claudius who later assumes the throne and marries his mother. He then behaves strangely, pretends to be insane as he turns mad on his mother, uncle and Ophelia. This paper seeks to determine if Hamlet was actually insane.

As an ambiguous play, it is quite challenging to ascertain if Hamlet was made or not. However, it is apparent to acknowledge that his strange behavior after his father's death was a sign of madness. At first, he turns against his mother whom he accuses of her sexual immorality. He is not pleased by her decision to be remarried by Claudius. As Edwards (2005, 77) exclaims, to him, it is not proper ' to be in the hands of another man just a few days after the death of her husband.' He describes her to be in a dire need of sexual fulfillment. In fact, he accuses her of having a strange sexual appetite which can not be satisfied. Later, he becomes infuriated by Claudius when he learns that he is responsible for the death of his father. ' He appears to act mad when he hears of his father's murder. At the time he speaks " wild and whirling words." [Act I, Scene v, lines 127-134]. This prompts him to launch a revenge mission because it is the right thing to do to the person who killed his late father. Moreover, he continues to do funny things such as delivering shocking speeches about his madness and deteriorating his friendship with Ophelia who has been his sweetheart. Definitely, this is a quite extra-ordinary behavior which can not be displayed

by a sane and stable mind.

Despite this kind of conduct, I would like to say that Hamlet is not mad.

However unique it may appear, it is clear that this is a calculated move. It is the only thing which can enable him to overcome the situation in which he found himself. As an inferior person, he is instructed to launch a revenge attack on the king. Ordinarily, this can not be a simple task because it comes with lots of challenges. It is a very risky thing to organize to kill such a senior person. Thus, it necessitated Hamlet to act mad. In this regard, I would like to point out that he decided to pretend to be mad. In his opinion, it was such a claim that would enable him to execute his ill motivated plans. He knew very well that he could not openly declare his plan to kill the king. Otherwise, he would be murdered just like his late father.

He therefore proves that he is not mad because he could not promptly react to the ghost's instructions. He intentionally opts to delay his mission. This is something which can not be done by an insane. If, by any chance, he had become mad, he would have acted blindly. Meaning, he would take his weapons and start hunting for his perceived enemy. However, as a sane individual, he takes time to design a strategy which would suit his plans. This explains why he 'secretly conducts investigations regarding this matter' (Irace, 2000: 49). In fact, he pretends to be mad while carrying out investigations to determine if the ghost had told him the truth about the killing of his father. This does not portray him as a mad person. If it were not for this thoughtful decision, the king would have learnt about his plans long before he executed them. No insane can be such careful because they would just act without conducting any research. If confronted with such a situation,

an insane would immediately react without thinking. However, Hamlet proved otherwise regardless of the magnitude of Claudius' offences against him.

Moreover, he behaves so funnily towards Ophelia. Unknown to many, he is just acting by pretending to be crazy. At one time, it makes Polonius; Ophelia's father is compelled to warn his daughter to be wary of Hamlet whom he does not approve to his strange behavior. He says of him, ' He knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger: he is far gone, far gone: and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near this' (2. 2. 8). This happens after he verbally abused her and going ahead to stab her father in the guts. However, Hamlet proves that he has not been insane when he behaves normally after the death of his lover. He says that he was actually the only person who was in a true love with Ophelia. He insists that his love could not be compared to that of Laertes who also claims to have been involved in a romantic relationship with Ophelia.

Eventually, Hamlet pretence can be observed when he delivers long philosophical speeches. At one time, he says, ' How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself, As I perchance hereafter shall think meet, to put an antic disposition on' (1. 5. 58) However, to the observers, he is nothing, but mad. They do not know that this is just a calculated move adopted by the sane Hamlet to disguise his sanity to the king. As an enemy, Claudius is not supposed to sense anything that ' could enable him to know about Hamlet's plans' (Bate and Eric Rasmussen, 2007, 116). His speeches were quite philosophical and needed a bright mind to comprehend. However, this was taken for granted because no one understood his intentions. Surprisingly,

after accomplishing his mission, he does not let people know about it. He keeps it secret to himself. This is another proof that he was acting to be mad. If he were mad, he would have told everyone about his success. In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Hamlet was melancholic, but not mad. The harmful deterioration of his mind was prompted by the circumstances in which he found himself. In fact, his melancholic condition was increased by the ghost who made him to turn against his mother, uncle, Ophelia and Laert. Despite his strange conducts, Hamlet was not mad. Otherwise, he would not have kept the secret of whatever action he had planned to execute and eventually succeeded in killing Claudius as instructed by the ghost. If it were set in the contemporary society, he would qualify to be a depressed person who was stressed by the tragic loss of his father and unsatisfactory actions by his mother.

Works Cited

Bate, Jonathan, and Eric Rasmussen, eds. Complete Works. By William Shakespeare. The RSC Shakespeare. New York: Modern Library, 2007. print.

Edwards, Phillip, ed. Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. New Cambridge Shakespeare ser. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print.

Irace, Kathleen. The First Quarto of Hamlet. New Cambridge Shakespeare ser. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Print.