

# Title: hamlet

Literature, William Shakespeare



Title: Hamlet Author: William Shakespeare Year of publication: 1603 Setting and time period: 16th century Denmark Primary Characters: \* Hamlet- indecisive, isolates himself, plans his “ antic disposition” \* Claudius- murder of King Hamlet, Hamlet’s uncle and stepfather, guilty \* Ophelia- Polonius’s daughter, Hamlet’s love, drowns Secondary Characters: \* Horatio- Hamlet’s friend \* Polonius- protective of Ophelia, believes Hamlet is affected by Ophelia’s love \* Gertrude- Hamlet’s mother and the queen \* Laertes- Polonius’s son and Ophelia’s brother, wants to kill Hamlet after Ophelia dies Point of view and other notable techniques: Most people believe that Hamlet was written in the 3rd person point of view. However, some literary critics argue that Shakespeare’s characters possess individuality too great to be bound under a fixed point of view. Like actual people, they act with intentions we cannot completely comprehend. This lack of fixed point of view allows the work to be up to interpretation, as it has been analyzed in a variety of ways. Shakespeare embodies various structural, literary, and stylistic techniques in his play. He often switches between the use of blank verse and prose when dealing with his different characters. He also uses iambic pentameter throughout the play. Examples of this can be most easily found in Hamlet’s “ To be or not to be” monologue in Act III. Favorite stylistic techniques of Shakespeare include soliloquy, particularly those uttered by Hamlet throughout the play (the “ To be or not to be...” soliloquy remains one of the most famous in English literature). He also uses various allusions to both biblical and mythological references throughout Hamlet, including a reference to the Garden of Eden in the Ghost of Hamlet’s father’s graphic description of his murder. Imagery is another favorite technique of

Shakespeare, as he uses his words to paint images of violence, chaos, beauty, and darkness. The language of Shakespeare is in a class of its own, as the old English text he employs throughout the play reflect his own unique manner of writing. Major conflicts and resolutions: \* Hamlet vs. His inner self- Hamlet struggles between action and inaction throughout the entire play. His inability to act out what he feels and kill Claudius ultimately leads to his death. \* Hamlet vs. Claudius, Polonius, Ophelia & Laertes: Hamlet has many external conflicts with the other characters that stem from his internal conflict. The conflict between Claudius and Hamlet leads to both of their deaths. Hamlet kills Polonius out of a fit of insanity. Ophelia and Hamlet seem to have various problems, (as seen by the nunnery scene) and in the end Ophelia ends up going insane and drowning. After Ophelia dies, Laertes wants to seek revenge. He and Hamlet fence and because of a mix up of swords, he is poisoned by his own sword. Key Scenes: \* A huge turning point in Hamlet is within rising action. The ghost tells hamlet to revenge his murder. Hamlet finds out that it is Claudius, but Hamlet does not kill Claudius because he is in prayer. \* The climax of " Hamlet" is when Hamlet stabs Polonius through the curtain. (III: v). This is the climax because since he violently killed Polonius, Hamlet gets into conflicts with the king. \* The resolution is when Hamlet returns from England, changed. Hamlet eventually has a fencing match with Laertes and then the royal family dies and so does Hamlet. (V.). Key Quotations: \* " Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death/ The memory be green..." (I. ii. 1-25) \* Claudius addresses his court explaining the death of the King and his marriage to Gertrude. \* " This above all, -to thine own self be true; And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou

canst not then be false to any man" (I. iii. 78-80) \* Polonius speaks these words to Laertes as he gives him final counsel before leaving home. \* " To be or not to be..."(III. i. 58-90) \* In this famous soliloquy, Hamlet ponders life and death, suicide and the afterlife, as well as action and inaction. \* " Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service—two dishes, but to one table. That's the end. " (IV. iii. 21) \* Hamlet says this to the king. In this humorous scene, he speaks of Polonius's death. Many think that the manner in which he speaks of the death in these lines prove his insanity. \* " The rest is silence" (V. ii. 356) \* Hamlet's last words spoken to Horatio before he dies

Theme statements & central questions: After losing a loved one unjustifiably, one may seek revenge and in doing so explore the limits of sanity. \* Why does Hamlet delay in killing Claudius? \* Was the ghost real or imagined? \* When is murder justifiable? \* Is suicide okay? \* How much thought is too much thought and not enough action? Your reactions: \* I found the soliloquy in Hamlet the most difficult sections of the play to comprehend, particularly due to the old English style in which they were written in. Shakespeare's dated language and implementation of iambic pentameter often confused me, as did his various allusions and colloquialisms, among other literary devices throughout these extended monologues. I had to re-read the " To be or not to be" soliloquy until I was finally able to understand it. Shakespeare reveals of his character's innermost demons and troubles through his soliloquy, bringing their emotional instability full circle. Realizing this made me strive even

harder to understand every aspect of these speeches, every allusion and image and literary device was crucial, even though it appears to be insignificant in the scheme of things. The details truly matter in his works. \* Personally, the "this above all" quote is one of my favorite quotes. Polonius may have been a fool for trying to teach Laertes this lesson at the last possible moment before his departure, but his words are wise ones. Through personal experience I have found truth behind the advice and hold it very close. I've discovered that if I remain true to myself and am honest with myself, it is virtually impossible to be false to others. I'll always remember these famous words. \* One aspect of Hamlet that really stood out to me was the scenes of the ghost. I personally believe that the ghost telling Hamlet to remember him and revenge his father's death, was actually within the imagination of Hamlet himself. There is no evidence in the play that suggests that the ghost is all in Hamlet's mind, however, there is no evidence against it, thus making it an effective claim. Notable literary devices: \* Shakespeare's use of tone creates a unique and completely entertaining style of dialogue for the play. The tone uses imagery and diction to add meaning to the text and make the play sad, funny, dark, or even violent at times. \* Shakespeare uses poetry in "Hamlet" and it is written in iambic Pentameter. "Hamlet", having been written in poetry, is portrayed beautifully and because of the meter, is executed properly. \* The use of symbols is evident in "Hamlet". The skull and the ghost are obvious symbols of death. However, other symbols can be analyzed like Ophelia and flowers, or Ophelia and innocence. Hamlet can be looked at as the "tragic hero", and many characters have symbolism behind them. Good for the following

prompts: This text would be best implemented in either an analysis or an argument prompt. For the analysis prompt, the student would be presented with a short excerpt from Hamlet and be required to discuss different techniques the author uses throughout the passage, connecting back to the overall meaning of the work as a whole. Any selection from Hamlet highlights Shakespeare's use of iambic pentameter, as well as his mastery of imagery and allusions. An argument prompt requires the student to analyze a given position in said argument, and either defend, challenge, or qualify the position using their own knowledge of the work. Anything goes with this prompt, so a total understanding of the various interpretations of Hamlet is necessary to succeed. Students must develop their own interpretation of the work and pinpoint elements in the work that contribute to their understanding of it. Hamlet would be an excellent choice when faced with any prompt dealing with revenge, avenging the death of a loved one, insanity, or family values, a few of the central themes of Shakespeare's work.