

Example of essay on manmade destinies in hamlet

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



Hamlet's characters often feel as though they are the victims of fate; however, much of what happens to them is borne of their own doing. The power of man to shape their own destiny is clear in the play - Hamlet himself says, "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god!" (II. ii. 293-297). The actions of the characters in Hamlet, from Hamlet's decision whether or not to kill Claudius to Gertrude's willful ignorance of her husband's doings, all lead to the often-gruesome fates that they encounter. Vengeance drives the central plot of Hamlet, as Hamlet seeks to take his revenge on Claudius for murdering his father. In order to do this, he attempts to disarm his uncle's suspicions by pretending to be mad, as well as attempting to inform his mother, Gertrude, of the treachery that Claudius has perpetrated.

Hamlet makes many attempts to kill Claudius, but is always stopped by his own indecisiveness, finding all manner of excuses to not go through with it. In one instance, he finds Claudius praying and finds his perfect chance, but he does not go through with it. He refrains because, if Claudius is slain while praying, he will end up in heaven, and that is not what Hamlet wants. In the end, Hamlet's own search for vengeance is his undoing, and also spells doom for many around him. He accidentally kills Polonius because he thinks he is a spy, while causes his love Ophelia to drown herself in grief. This perpetuates the cycle of revenge, as her suitor Laertes seeks a duel against Hamlet, which leads to the deaths of the both of them, in addition to Claudius and Gertrude. Laertes even seems to accept that his own actions led to his death - "I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery" (V. ii. 12).

Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, is a model of repressed guilt and shallow ignorance. As opposed to the main character, Hamlet, who is very thoughtful and very concerned about the nature of "this mortal coil," Gertrude's shallow desire for her own vices is what drives her. Even after her husband's death, she marries his brother Claudius "within a month." Gertrude's sexuality is a large part of what defines her; it is implied that Gertrude simply needed her sexual needs satisfied quickly, and this is what motivated her to marry Claudius. As the Ghost tells Hamlet, "Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast, with witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,-- O wicked wit, and gifts that have the power So to seduce!--won to his shameful lust The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen" (I. V 42-5). By 'adulterate beast,' he does not mean unfaithful necessarily, but merely contaminated or changed irrevocably.

Gertrude is not a willing accomplice in the conspiracy to kill Hamlet's father; instead, she is a childish and ignorant pawn in Claudius' overall plan to rule over Denmark. All Gertrude really cares about is continuing her lavish lifestyle and being sexually satisfied. Often, she manages to lie to herself about the truth of her circumstances, and forces her head in the sand when Hamlet confronts her about Claudius' possible involvement in his father's murder. Gertrude does not just lie to herself; she lies to others as well. This leads to the ignorance of Claudius' doings that results in her death by poison.

In conclusion, the characters of Hamlet often make their own destinies through the actions that they perform in the play. Hamlet himself works himself into the destiny he has as avenger of his father's death, and

Gertrude's own ignorance of the situation in order to satisfy her own personal desires puts her in harm's way. Nearly everyone in the play, through their mistakes or choices, paves the way for their own destruction. This results in a story that effectively and fascinatingly deals with the issue of hubris and our own hand in our destiny.

Works Cited

Shakespeare, William. (1603). Hamlet.

Dover, William. What Happens in Hamlet. Cambridge University Press; 3rd edition, 1951.