

Hamlets role as a hero

Literature, British Literature



There are numerous ways to define what a hero is. In Shakespeare's "Hamlet" the main protagonist, Young Prince Hamlet can be defined as a man who we can assign the name of a real tragic hero to. The definition of a tragic hero, " a great or virtuous character in a dramatic tragedy who is destined for downfall, suffering, or defeat" exhibits what happens to Hamlet in the play. Furthermore, although he is not able to retain his own life in the end, the traits he exhibits throughout the play show that he deserves to be given the name of a hero. Elsinore is in an unnatural state and heroism is needed to set things back in order. Hamlet's devotion and his display of intelligence clearly exhibit that he, by far passes the test to be labeled as a true tragic hero. Because Hamlet uses his intelligence to solve problems and come up with creative ideas, he is heroic. Hamlet attempts to solve problems and get his vengeance in more passive, undercover ways as opposed to violence with head on wars. Hamlet states, " The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king" (2. 2. 557-558) which is an example of Hamlet using his intelligence and creativity to seek out evidence about Claudius. Therefore, because Claudius does not expect this, his raw emotions will show and Hamlet can examine and confirm that the ghost was telling the truth about King Hamlet's murder. Hamlet can now be more confident in listening and obeying the ghost of his father telling him: " Adieu Adieu, Adieu. Remember me"(1. 5. 91). Furthermore, another one of Hamlet's intelligent tactics is his use of metadrama. He plays different roles, like an actor in order to succeed in whatever or whomever he wants to succeed. Hamlet would always rather act than do. Early on in the play, Hamlet comes to the conclusion that acting crazy is the only way he will be able to generate

a cloud of confusion sufficient enough to cover up his plot to avenge his father's murder. Hamlet quotes to his friends, " How strange or odd some'er I bear myself / As I perchance hereafter shall think meet / to put an antic disposition on . . . That you know aught of me . . . " (1. 5. 170-179). He is warning his friends that he is going to be putting on an " antic" or " clown-like" act in order to seem like a madman. We can conclude that even though Hamlet does not take on the warrior role as his father did, his renaissance man techniques work for him and display the intelligent man he is.

Throughout the play, Hamlet is devoted to what he believes in and his goals making him a true hero. To start with, Hamlet returns from the university in Wittenberg, Germany, to find his father dead, his mother married to the king's brother Claudius, and Claudius being the newly self-crowned King. After all this he decides to stay in Elsinore and leave his friends and comfort place behind to try and straighten out issues in " rotten" Elsinore. This shows that he is dedicated to his beliefs and plans to get vengeance and clean up the mess he is dealing with. Also, Gertrude, his mother states, " I pray thee stay with us, go not to Wittenberg. " (1. 2. 119). His mother's words also have a place in Hamlet's heart and he wants to watch over her and eventually have her realize that Claudius is not an acceptable husband for her. While Hamlet is staying in Elsinore, he is very careful about who he trusts and tells things to. He does not want anyone to hear any of his business or find out why he is acting like a madman. When Hamlet is talking with Ophelia in a so-called empty room he is being very careful in suspicion that he could possibly be being spied on. Hamlet says to Ophelia: " Get thee to a nunnery / Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? " (3. 1. 119-120).

This takes lots of courage to say this to a woman he has loved. It is an insulting order and was probably not something he would choose to say if he wasn't paranoid about other knowing his business. Hamlet is obviously dedicated in staying true to his plan and beliefs. At the end of the play, Hamlet is pressured into a sword fight and even though he knows this includes the hazard of him possibly getting killed, he still decides to go on with the proposition. Against Horatio's advice, Hamlet agrees to fight, saying: "all's ill here about my heart, but that one must be ready for death, since it will come no matter what one does" (5. 2. 222). Dedication is key to being a hero and Hamlet is loyal to this trait on and on again. We have to ask: Do Hamlet's intelligent ways and dedication give him the name of a hero? As long as we don't look at a hero as a typical warrior like his surrounding comparisons we can confirm that Prince Hamlet has been a true hero all along. In the end, he won the battle, in time to save his soul although not his life.