

Oedipus rex vs. hamlet essay sample

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Oedipus Rex vs. Hamlet

Compare and contrast of Oedipus and Hamlet. Is Oedipus more a man of action? Or is he more a man driven by whim and sudden, rash decisions? Which character is more selfless? Does Hamlet show any signs of selfish motives in his actions or inactions? Which protagonist seems more learned, wiser, religious, loving, and incestuous?

Which seems to be a better murder investigator? Does Oedipus have any of Claudius' motives when he kills the king, Laius? Then which murderer is more blameworthy—Oedipus or Claudius? Different men in different eras it is hard to compare two men with such obvious religious and moralistic differences. Oedipus grew up in the time of the Greek gods, gods who set their examples through destruction of the titans, incestuous marriages with siblings, and rash actions that changed the way their followers lived. Hamlet, on the other hand, grew up with strict Catholicism shaping his conscience. He followed that conscience to the letter, allowing for the lengthy period in between the revelation of the ghost to the actual bloodbath in the closing scenes. This lapse is what sets the differences between Oedipus and Hamlet, for as soon as Oedipus had the truth fully revealed to him, he acted, rash as his actions may have been. By far, Oedipus is the more thorough of investigators, but this is due, mainly to his pride that will not allow otherwise.

Hamlet took his time to trap Claudius into admission of guilt, whereas all of Thebes knew that Oedipus was on the lookout for a murderer. The quiet, gentle nature of Hamlet versus the Vanity of Oedipus is the key to the debate over whether the actions both men take are selfish or selfless. This is

a debate that is not answered easily and fully deserves further thought. When discussing which of the murders was the worst. That of Claudius comes to mind first. After putting thought into the mass murder of Laius' caravan, though, that was not done. Which is truly worse, premeditated murder or heat-of-the-moment "road rage (the original road rage at that)? As a controversial claimant of the throne Claudius is the ultimate familiar turncoat, but as a guiltless killer of men who would not let him pass on a road, one must wonder if Oedipus has a conscience at all. One can suppose that this, again, is the result of religious values and differences in the time period. His story about killing where 3 roads meet, Oedipus expresses no remorse over the slaughter; even one who kills in self-defense should feel a sense of loss and regret the taking of life.

✂ Oedipus and Hamlet seek revenge for their fathers (although this is ironic in Oedipus Rex). Although Oedipus's arrogance may have led to his downfall, it is their impulsiveness that does in each man: Oedipus's decree of exile parallels the gods' requirements, but Hamlet's stabbing of Ophelia's father right after NOT stabbing Claudius means that, in the grand scheme of things; he will have to die rather than assume the throne. Both plays are tragedies that result from behind-the-scenes machinations—the god's plot against O's family because of Laius, while King Hamlet's brother plots against him. ✂ Perhaps the vivid imagery of poison in Hamlet parallels the curse "in the family blood" in Greek tragedies in Oedipus Rex. In comparing and contrasting Oedipus and Hamlet, I see Oedipus as more of a man given to sudden, rash decisions and quick temper. Oedipus is definitely a man of action, where Hamlet stewes over whether he should kill Claudius. Oedipus is

a proud and selfless man, but is more concerned about his image than Hamlet. Hamlet is a very sensitive, moody person, very much in awe of his deceased father, who obviously didn't care about his image, or he wouldn't have faked 'madness'.

Oedipus was a very passionate man, passionate about his position, his wife/mother, people of Thebes, and passionate about his concern for Polybus and Merope. Hamlet shows no genuine love for anyone except for his father and maybe his mother, but this is questionable because he would've killed his mother had the ghost instructed him to. Even when Hamlet declares his love for Ophelia, he later claims it's not true. He is, however, passionate about killing Claudius. Another contrast is that Hamlet is a thinker and a planner, where Oedipus is more emotional and wasn't patient enough to fully investigate the murder of Laius. Blame Oedipus for killing but not incest, Hamlet for both. Oedipus is a man of quick action and hasty conclusions, and doesn't even attempt to foresee the consequences of his actions. As for which is the more selfless, I can't see much but self-interest in either of them. Hamlet is more of a scholar than Oedipus.

He is also the wiser of the two, even at the height of madness. In the matter of religion, I believe Oedipus to be the more religious of the two, though that can be attributed to the nature of the Greek gods. It is easy to be religious when you may run into a god at any moment. Which of the two are the most incestuous? Hamlet, Oedipus' incest is unknown to him. Oedipus is the better investigator, finding the killer quickly and easily. Oedipus had no real reason to kill King Laius, making him far more worthy of blame for the killing than

Claudius.” Ruler vs. Scholar Oedipus is much more decisive than Hamlet. It takes the entire play before Hamlet makes up his mind, and then it is Claudius who brings about the finale, not Hamlet. Oedipus is quick to judge and make decisions before he really thinks about them. I believe Hamlet to be the more selfless of the two. He was also selfish, though; he didn’t think how his actions would affect others, such as Ophelia. He realized this in the end; however, and his character grew because of it. I also think Hamlet was the more learned, but he was still very young. Oedipus, after ruling a kingdom for ten years, was the wiser man.

Oedipus was the more religious man, also, a product of the Greek society. Oedipus never really spoke of love, while Hamlet was a very passionate individual. Hamlet was definitely more incestuous; Oedipus was not aware that Jocasta was his mother. Oedipus was the better investigator, but only because Hamlet didn’t really investigate. The ghost of his father told him what happened; Hamlet just had to prove it. Oedipus did not have any of Claudius’ motives; he did not conspire to commit murder; it was a chance encounter on a road where his anger got the best of him. Claudius is much more blameworthy for conspiring to kill his own brother, just to gain the throne.” ¶ Too what degrees are Oedipus and Hamlet victims of fate? Of fault and hasty conclusions, they don’t even attempt to foresee the consequences of his actions. As for which is the more selfless, I can’t see much but self-interest in either of them. Hamlet is more of a scholar than Oedipus; he is also the wiser of the two.