

# Analysis of hamlet in terms of aristotle

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



Poetics was written in 350 B. C and to this day it impacts the way literature is written. Even when analyzing the works of one of the most famous authors to exist, Shakespeare, we see that his work also meets the guidelines of literature set by Aristotle's Poetics. When looking at one of Shakespeare's works, particularly Hamlet we can begin to take the play apart and analyze a single scenario at a time, and we notice just how Shakespeare has followed these abstract rules.

In Hamlet Shakespeare has chosen to base his play on the six rules to a tragic hero set by Aristotle, the function of the play, and the purpose of a tragedy.

The first of Aristotle's rules or guidelines to a tragic hero is that the tragic hero must be a person of high stature, using their status to enforce their virtues, nobility, and modesty. When we look at Hamlet he is in fact a person of high status, he is the son of the previous king, and is still in line for the royal throne of Denmark.

Although he is of high position he is also well received and loved by the people. This fulfills the first of the guidelines. The second is that the tragic hero is not perfect, they must have a way of connecting to the general public.

The public takes in Hamlet as one of their own, they see him as being a good candidate to succeed to the throne. His acceptance clearly satisfies the second requisite. The third of Aristotle's rules is that the hero's downfall is partially his own fault. Their downfall comes from a brief mishap in judgement. This is immediately verified with the story of Hamlet, he chose

<https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-hamlet-in-terms-of-aristotle/>

not to kill Claudius when he believed him to be praying and cleansing himself of sin, because Hamlet chose not to commit the deed. He goes on to kill Polonius believing it was the king.

This infuriates Laertes', who in turn kills Hamlet with a poison sword.

Hamlet's mishap in judgement lead to his own death. The fourth rule characteristic of a tragic hero is that their punishment exceeds the crime they did. Instead of an eye for an eye, its an eye for an arm. Hamlet's punishment does not include solely his own death, his punishment includes seeing his own mother die after having been poisoned by Claudius whose poison was intended for Hamlet, and also seeing Ophelia being placed into her grave, he lost the one person whom he truly loved.

The loss of two loved ones and losing his own life in the process more than compensates for his murder of Polonius. Aristotle follows up the idea of punishment with the idea that the fall of the hero has lead to greater good. The death of Claudius, The Queen, and Hamlet allowed for Fortinbras to come into Denmark with a great ease, and according to Horatio, Hamlet had handed over the thrown to Fortinbras. This shows us that Hamlet acknowledges that the land is rightfully his, but also that his death came from an accident in an attempt to get revenge for the death of his father.

Another example is when after speaking to the Captain who was leading an army into Poland he had an utter realization in which he realized that he must continue to seek revenge for his father. If thousands of soldiers are willing to lose their lives over a meager piece of land, than he is willing to risk his in return for revenge. The last of the rules is that tragedy is not

meant to be sad, but rather serve as a cleansing of emotions. At the end of the play the chain of being after having been disrupted has once again regained structure, and composure.

The pyramid takes shape again and instead of feeling mournful over the loss of lives. The audience feels relieved in a sense, tranquility has been established. Fortinbras becomes king with no further anguish. A conclusion has been come to in the mystery of the old king's death, and the culprit and those involved were put to rest. Shakespeare has managed to condense all 6 rules into his play, in following the guidelines set by Aristotle, Shakespeare has created a tragic hero. The play and the purpose of tragedy and defined by Aristotle is one that conveys pity.. Pity is a simple concept to grasp.

From the Beginning after having learned that Hamlet's father was killed by his own brother. We begin to feel pity and remorse for Hamlet for his loss. On top of the loss of his father, his mother has two months since losing her husband, remarried the brother. Hamlet's uncle the new king is the suspected killer which makes the dilemma even more troublesome. There is also a part of Aristotle's principals of tragedy that Hamlet does not follow. That is the unity principal, in which the entire play must occur in the amount of time and in a single scenario as the play to put on.

Shakespeare's play takes place over several days, and in various locations, the castle, graveyard, etc... Although Shakespeare did not follow Aristotle's guidelines to the dot, he still wrote a play that we study to this day. The works of Hamlet is study today and questions such as why we read Hamlet arise? To gain further understanding both about Poetics, and Shakespeare. It

would be necessary to read another of Shakespeare work through the point of view of Poetics and how Poetics influenced that play.