

Hamlet essay – themes

Literature, British Literature



Any text that is rich in technique and deals with universal concerns will be effective in communicating significant ideas to the responder regardless of the context of the audience. Shakespeare's revenge tragedy play, Hamlet, explores concerns such as morality and the difficulty of taking action, especially when certainty is impossible. His young protagonist, Hamlet, acts as an effective vehicle as he uses powerful language to explore his moral dilemmas.

What distinguishes Hamlet from other revenge tragedy plays is the amount of action expected, especially from Hamlet himself as he continuously hesitates due to him trying to be absolute certain of his actions. Hamlet handles an extremely complicated dilemma which is a combination of feelings that does not allow him to be tranquil. One of the reasons is due to the mourning of his father's death, which he already feels distraught about. The other reason for Hamlet's problem is his mother's sudden remarriage of her brother-in-law, Claudius, whom here in this play he is presented as the villain.

As Hamlet says, " A little month, or ere those shoes were old... a beast that wants discourse of reason would have mourned longer. " Hamlet here is showing his disgust towards Gertrude, his mother, as she is remarrying only two months after her husband's death. Furthermore Claudius is blood related to Hamlet hence deepening his anger, turning to madness. Hamlet's hatred towards Gertrude is seen in Act 1 scene 2 as Hamlet expressed in a negative tone; " seems, madam! Nay it is; I know not seems. / This not alone my inky cloak, good mother," Also Hamlet's first soliloquy in the play shows his distress towards Claudius and Gertrude's marriage.

His internal dilemma is explicitly shown when this ghost of Hamlet's father appears in Act 1 scene 5 as he calls upon, "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder." It is from this point forward that Hamlet struggles with the dilemma of whether or not to kill Claudius, and if so, when to do it. Doubts and uncertainty arises as the ghost disappears, as suggested when he says, "Are you spirit of health or goblin damned?" This uncertainty is crucial as this is the beginning point of Hamlet's internal struggle. My personal view of why Hamlet delays his action is because of the question, "Is this morally correct. Hamlet is a thinker a philosopher, shown clearly by his use of words and language that contains double meaning, "Ay, madam it is common" with the word "common" suggest literal meaning, it is common that "all lives must die", and figuratively it is common to remarry straight after her husband's death. From this fact that Hamlet is a thinker, he questions himself and is amazed by the human structure, shown in one of his soliloquies he stated with exclamatory: "Oh what a piece of work is man!" The mystery of the afterlife is what prevents himself from killing himself. This is shown in his most famous soliloquy: "To be, or not to be. In other words, "to die, or not do die". The unknown factors of the afterlife as well as the morality of it, is what caused the delay for killing Claudius. Hamlet retains its value and textual integrity because it explores universal concerns that still remain in today's society. Some of these concerns in today's society are the morality and hesitation of taking action is explicitly shown in two scenes from Hamlet; Act 1 scene 2 and scene 5. The use of powerful language techniques such as soliloquies, metaphors and asides helps bring out the message to the responder, hence having textual integrity.