

# Oedipus and hamlet comparative essay english literature essay

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Miss VulicENG4UOOedipus and Hamlet comparative essayDeath can upset an individual even when they do not anticipate it, affecting them to search for solutions. This is seen in both the plays Hamlet, written by William Shakespeare and Oedipus written by Sophocles. Although Oedipus and Hamlet are successful in their mission, Hamlet is more successful than Oedipus due his knowledge of greater truth and patience. Firstly, Hamlet's knowledge of greater truth is beneficial in making him more successful than Oedipus. Comparing Hamlet and Oedipus in their quest to find the truth, Hamlet instantly accepts assistance contrary to Oedipus. Consequently, Hamlet is more successful since he heeds to the ghost of King Hamlet when the ghost tells Hamlet that his supposed death caused by the sting of a serpent is false. Following this, Hamlet pays attention to the instruction of his father in very calculated ways to find the truth about the way in which his father dies. The Ghost makes this known by saying that, " a serpent stung me, so the whole of Denmark is by a forged process of my death rankly abused; but now, thou noble youth, this serpent that did string thy father's life Now wears my crown." (Shakespeare 1. 5, 35-40). The quotation reveals Claudius as the person responsible for King Hamlet's death. In their conversation, the ghost clarifies how Claudius is jealous of what he accomplished and also how Claudius took advantage of the fact that Gertrude was vulnerable at the time of his death. Due to his words, Hamlet vows to avenge his father's murderer. By accepting the ghost's confrontations, Hamlet detects the killer of his father who is his uncle making him more knowledgeable about the truth. This makes Hamlet's knowledge of greater truth efficient because he followed his father's ghost to find answers

even when he could have died from encountering the ghost or gone mad as Horatio had predicted. Simply, though there were consequences involved he still embarks on this journey to seek the truth. Secondly, Hamlet's knowledge for greater truth is shown through his ability to find the letter that illustrates his death and also the ways in which he creates suspicion and anxiety in his Uncle. Hamlet makes certain pronouncements about his father's death when he acts like he is mad. He tells Horatio about his trip from Denmark to England as he explains, " my fear forgetting manners, to unseal their grand commission; where I found, Horatio, O royal knavery!-an exact command, importing Denmark's health and England's too, with, ho! Such bugs and goblins in my life, that, on the surprise, no leisure bated, No, not stay the grinding of axe, my head should be struck off." (5. 2, 19-24). Through his pretense to be mad, Hamlet proves himself as highly knowledgeable of the truth thus the ghost's assertion that his Uncle killed his father. At this point of the play, Claudius wants to eliminate Hamlet due to his anxiety by sending him from Denmark to England to have him killed by the king of England. Though, his uncle's argument is that Hamlet's madness is a disgrace to the Kingdom and attempts to send him away, he only does this to prevent Hamlet from finding out the truth. However, Hamlet outsmarts Claudius by finding the letter he gives to Guildenstern and Rosencrantz. He tells Horatio about his suspicion that Claudius's letter contains information about his death which is in Guildenstern and Rosencrantz's bags. Hamlet being intelligent, he changes the letter to have Guildenstern and Rosencrantz killed instead. This proves Hamlet's ability to predict the truth based on his Uncle's attempt to kill him. In the end, Hamlet's ability to exercise his intelligence

through careful steps allows him to avoid his own death and defeat those who wanted his downfall. On the other hand, Oedipus affronts Teiresias when he confronts him about the death of king Laius. Oedipus continues to live in denial and rejects the truth. He tells Teiresias, as blind as he is, he cannot make guesses about things to harm him or any man who sees the light. He assumes Teiresias tells him he is a killer because he wants to rip him of his position as the king of Thebes. This makes Hamlet's more successful in his mission than Oedipus because his knowledge of greater truth. Oedipus's ignorance leads him to his blindness of the truth when he denies the truth about the killer of king Laius and blames Creon as the plotter of his downfall. He tells Creon he is his bitterest enemy and he needs no help from him. This proves that as Hamlet accepts the ghost assistance in finding the truth, Oedipus refuses assistance from Creon and blames him as a plotter of his downfall and also, as Hamlet follows the ghost to find the truth, Oedipus rejects the truth by insulting the deliverer of the truth. This makes Hamlet more successful in his mission than Oedipus because Hamlet embraces the truth whereas Oedipus ignores it. Hamlet is more patient than Oedipus which makes him more successful in his mission because Oedipus's flaws compel him to make hasty decisions unlike him. At the three cross roads, Oedipus kills Laius because he is rude to him. He explains to Jocasta that, " it was the driver that thrust me aside and him I struck for I was angry; he tumbled headlong out of the carriage and every man of them there I killed." (Sophocles 798). This particularly shows Oedipus as a man whose emotions drive him to his decisions. At this point of the play, Oedipus is at the verge of finding the killer of King Laius which he thinks could be him. After denying

everybody's solution, he comes to a realization that he could be the one to face the harsh punishment of having his eyes plucked out. Sensing his own downfall, he opens up to Jocasta as he tells her about how he hastily killed some people at the three cross roads without giving it a second thought. Oedipus's hastiness in decision making makes him less patient than Hamlet. However, Hamlet makes his own choices about things he does which give him time to take things at his own pace making him more patient than Oedipus. Oedipus on the hand does not determine his own fate because it is predetermined by the gods. At the end of the play, Oedipus is not patient enough to analyze his whole life has been a lie and how to make things right amongst the people he offended and his children. He blames himself as he says " Alas! All out! All known, no more concealment! O light! May I never look back again, revealed as I am, sinful in my begetting, sinful in marriage, sinful in shedding blood! " (Sophocles, 58). This proves Oedipus's way of saying, the gods are not to be blamed but rather his own deeds set the ball rolling. At this point, he realizes the woman he loves, his mother and wife is dead so he doles out punishment to himself by taking out his eyes with the idea, never to see the fruit of his sinful labour. Although Oedipus is successful in his mission, he lost his sight and everything he worked and lived for. Hamlet is more powerful in determining the course of his life making him more successful as he is able to witness the death of his Uncle at the end the play as against Oedipus whose destiny was predetermined and his actions also hastened his own downfall leading him to lose his eyesight. In conclusion, both Hamlet and Oedipus are on the quest to find the truth. They are both on a mission to find the killer of their fathers while

discovering their fates. As Hamlet seeks revenge as he struggles with the idea of killing Claudius, Oedipus offers himself to find and prosecute Laius's murderer. Even though Oedipus and Hamlet are successful in their mission, Hamlet is more successful than Oedipus due his knowledge of greater truth and patience. This is apparent through the choices they make individually as well the actions they take towards it. Oedipus however is quick tempered as he kills Laius in an argument. Oedipus's flaws and fate led his to self-destruction thus making Hamlet more successful than Oedipus in their missions respectively.