

Discuss the importance of the father figure in hamlet

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



Discuss The Importance of The Father Figure In Hamlet The importance of father figures in Hamlet is like the base of a cheerleading pyramid. Without that strong base, then there can't be a proper structure built. Especially considering the fact that back then, and even up until today the father is the one who's suppose to support and make sure the family is held together in a well manner. Just like in Hamlets case, King Claudius wasn't much of a father figure since he only wanted to be king, and Hamlet only considered him as his uncle and not father. In result of that Hamlet turned out to be a whole different person than expected. In Ophelia's case, she had her real father Polonius and still managed to control herself. Since Polonius was always looking out for his daughter, she could still feel that sense of protection, in her family including from her brother Laertes also. You need the base of a father figure in order to have a properly structured family. Everything the fathers do in Hamlet effect the children's behaviour and decisions in the long run. On the other hand, in some circumstances every family is different. They may or may not need that father figure in their life, or they're not as dependent on them as much as the next individual, like Hamlet who only wanted his real father back. They learn to be independent and not to rely on anymore. They'll accept help if given but when there's a way they can solve the situation by themselves, one will take that chance. A family full of independent individuals is as good as a family that's structured around the father figure and authority as well. When there's some sort of father figure in an individual's life, they can be a major impact on their son or daughters decisions and be a good or bad influence. The relationship between King Claudius and Hamlet wasn't very strong at all. Claudius pretended to

nurture, care and love Hamlet. After King Hamlet died, that's when Hamlet started to become depressed and angry with his life. He started too dressed in all black clothing, bringing a sense of evilness and depression to his character. While Gertrude tried to help him and Claudius stood aside, Hamlet never wanted to accept the help because he knew it was only in vain. When Claudius starts to put on a fatherly act, he doesn't want to trust him, especially after he married his mother. What kind of person would Hamlet be if that remarriage never happened? While Hamlet was still grieving his father's death, Claudius gives him a lecture to get over it (II. ii. 87-92). King Claudius doesn't actually care about Hamlet's well being, he just wanted to become King of Denmark. The ghost of Old Hamlet keeps visiting Hamlet and informs him about that. " The serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown. " (I. iv. 39-40). Hamlet idealizes his father and says that Uncle Claudius doesn't measure up to Old Hamlet anymore than he young Hamlet. Since King Claudius wasn't such a supportive step-father, Hamlet began to shun his own family and wanted nothing to do with them. The more Claudius pretended to be more of a father to Hamlet, the more he resented him. The strong base wasn't present in the family and everything began to go downhill for Hamlet, and Claudius. Later on, Hamlet walks in on Claudius praying for what he had done, and he wants to kill him for what he did to his father Old Hamlet. From this point, the father figure has disappeared because Hamlet wants to revenge his father's death now. If Claudius didn't murder Old Hamlet nobody would be in this situation, Hamlet becoming a depressed person and King Claudius regretting what he did to his brother. Since it's been established that Hamlet is the type of person who is

dependent his family and needed that strong father figure in his life, if Old Hamlet was still alive and his Uncle Claudius didn't try to become a father he's not, Hamlet would be sane. King Claudius' problem was that he kept trying to be something he's not and Hamlet went crazy in result of that. Claudius didn't give him the structure he really needed. The relationship between Polonius and his daughter and son, Ophelia and Laertes was quiet structured. Polonius was somewhat of a father figure in his house looking after Ophelia and Laertes. He might have acted controlling at times throughout Hamlet, but he surely wanted to be a great influence on his kids. Polonius didn't want his daughter Ophelia being with Hamlet after she tells him that she's in love with the young Prince and he's in love with her to. He believes that he's still a young boy and he's going to play with Ophelia's emotions (I. iii. 123-129). Polonius explains to her that he knows what goes on inside a young man's mind and what he really means when Hamlet said he loved her. A good father watching over his only daughter and being protective is natural, same with her brother Laertes warning her about Hamlet being bad and that's why Polonius forbids Ophelia from seeing Hamlet anymore. He knows if she has relations with Hamlet, then she would be shaming herself and the family. Polonius being the father figure knows how to structure his family and looks after them for their well being. When Polonius forbids Ophelia from seeing Hamlet, he also makes a plan to see what's going on with Hamlet and has Ophelia set him up. Ophelia then denies his love for her, and Hamlet turns on her and taking back everything he said including having loved her (III. i. 119-121). Ophelia then realizes that her father was right about Hamlet all along. As for his son Laertes, he shows

him trust but is still sceptical about him going off France. Polonius has him spied upon to see if he's getting himself into trouble. Polonius shows his family care and love for them and that's what made them stay sane and not go crazy like Hamlet. Ophelia looks up to her father Polonius, because she believes in him and his position and is also a good father figure. Polonius kept his family strong, throughout Hamlet. Even though Ophelia was old enough to make her own decisions, she was still guided by Polonius and that made a major impact on her because she felt loved. Just like the pyramid structure, Polonius did have that strong base to hold up his family and keep them from going delirious. Each one of these fathers had different techniques on how to take care of their family. Claudius putting on an act to care for his new family and pretending to be concerned about Hamlet, when he really only wanted to become king of Denmark wasn't a very good idea because it had an impact on them. In the beginning it's brought to mind that Claudius killed his own brother, Old Hamlet. Right away the idea that Claudius has no morals or care for his family or any family could be placed in ones' mind. Uncle Claudius drove Hamlet crazy to the point that he'd dress in all black. If he would have stayed away from him, he wouldn't have killed Polonius either thinking it was King Claudius. Once one person died, it started a chain reaction, leading to the deaths of others, such as Laertes, Claudius, and Ophelia. Finally there was Polonius. While he was looking out for his son and daughters well being, it impacted their behaviour and decision making. Polonius took a different approach and actually talked sense into Ophelia by telling her never to see Hamlet again, knowing he could possible break her heart. That's what gave Ophelia the security of her

family knowing that she's being watched over. Both King Claudius and Polonius had an impact on their family it just comes down to whether they were a positive or negative influence. In conclusion, both father figures in Hamlet were important because it made the characters, Hamlet, Ophelia and Laertes who they were throughout the play. Ophelia was more independent and wanted to find things out for herself. She stayed normal until her father Polonius died, showing that although she wasn't as dependent the father figure has an important role to fill and effects most individuals. Hamlet on the other hand went psycho and wanted his real father to come back in his life, so he can have a real role model unlike King Claudius who tried to push himself onto Hamlet and be something he isn't, a father. Every family needs that strong structural base at the bottom to withhold any problem, and to keep the family in line. If you don't have a strong father figure, the family will crumble just like Hamlet. Work Cited - Shakespeare, William. Hamlet. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square-Pocket, 1992.