

Appearances can
never be trusted so
as one can be
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Appearances is one of the key themes in 'Hamlet', and it occurs throughout the whole play, each character has been seen to put on an appearance, even Horatio who can be seen as someone who doesn't put on an appearance, yet he does for Hamlet's sake. The effects, appearance has on the audience vary, as some think that, appearances can be never trusted, but they are confused at what Shakespeare is trying to say to the audience, whereas others believe that appearances is the best theme, as we see a whole other personality, and this makes the audience see the characters as not 'one dimensional' but maybe two or three dimensional and this brings the characters alive on stage. Appearance also links other themes together, the theme of reality and imagination, madness, deception, evil and good. Appearance can be the most intriguing aspect about Hamlet, as the characters we originally see, we portray them only in one light, but with the theme of appearances, we see them in another light. Also, the idea of appearances is useful, as Shakespeare intending for it to be used as something to mask your true emotions and feelings.

For example, Claudius, the audience could see him as the devil because he deceives everyone and that he doesn't have a "conscience", but when Polonius is advising Ophelia, we see his true emotions, as he believes it is a "heavy burden" to hold all this guilt for killing Old Hamlet, as well as not showing his true side, as he is just pretending to be good, when in fact, he isn't: "How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience". Therefore appearances let us see what is on the outside rather than the inside. This intrigues the audience about Hamlet, as we see another side to that character. Further support that appearance can be the most intriguing

aspect about Hamlet, is that most of the characters that put on an appearance are usually the ones who have soliloquies, for example, Hamlet he pretends he is mad on the outside: "crafty madness", only to lead Rosencrantz and Guildenstern astray, so that they cannot figure out his plan. However, when he is doing a soliloquy, he shows that he is putting on a mad-act, just to get closer in getting rid of Claudius, because he has committed a sin, not only against God, but also against the state, as he has committed treason, for killing 'Old' Hamlet, murder and incest, which are against God's morals, therefore appearances hides the characters ulterior motive.

This is similar to 'Othello', when you see Iago, who puts on a mask, to cover up his motives and feelings, just in order to please everyone. Another reason why appearances can be the most intriguing aspect about Hamlet is that it makes the other themes like trust; hope and love, become masked and are never shown. So, we do not see the character's beliefs and what do they really feel like. For example Ophelia in the nunnery scene, she is the main heroine, she puts an appearance to Hamlet, pretending that she doesn't know what's going on, when in fact she does. This does not only lead to her, madness, but also her downfall and the end of Hamlet and Ophelia's romantic relationship.

This could also be seen that appearances cannot be trusted, as she has undeniably lost not only her romantic relationship, but also her trust from Hamlet and she has undeniably become a mere puppet for Claudius and Polonius, to manipulate to their needs and to ruin her. On the other hand, Appearances can never be trusted so as one can be confused at

Shakespeare's message, as Young Hamlet provides a good appearance for <https://assignbuster.com/appearances-can-never-be-trusted-so-as-one-can-be-confused-at-shakespeares-message-essay/>

Old Hamlet, yet when we see Old Hamlet, he can be portrayed as someone who emotional blackmails people to get his own way, as he wants Hamlet to kill the “ snake” who “ wears [Old Hamlet’s] crown”, as he has corrupted Denmark. Shakespeare is trying to present a middle-ground for appearances, as it can be either good or bad; it just depends on the character. Another example is Claudius, we may portray him as wholly bad, but when we see him in his soliloquy, we see that he isn’t as bad as people present him and even when he is praying, he believes that he is not worthy of Heaven, therefore he cannot entirely be seen as evil, as his crime is of a “ brother’s murder! ” and despite his Machiavellian pragmatism, Claudius inhabits the same moral universe as his nephew. Offence’s gilded hand may shove by justice.

.. But tis not so above... There is no shuffling.

.. Try what repentance can... Yet what can it when one cannot repent? “, Therefore appearances can be trusted in that Claudius is as good as Hamlet.

Another reason why people, say that appearances can never be trusted so as one can be confused at Shakespeare’s message is Rosencrantz and Guildenstern because they are Hamlet’s best friends, and so we trust them, yet Shakespeare does present them as untrustworthy, as they would betray Hamlet for goods from Claudius. Both show that it will be very difficult for Hamlet to uncover the reliability hidden within the lies. Another reason why people would get confused about Shakespeare message is that, we would present Gertrude as frail and weak, only desiring to be queen, yet Shakespeare does present her as strong because she is merely adapting to

the circumstances of her husband's death for the good of the kingdom.

Another reason why appearances can never be trusted, so as one can be confused at Shakespeare's message is that of the Players, as they have to act and put on an appearance, deceiving or not, as they have to act as Old Hamlet, Gertrude and Claudius, we already have an idea on what they are like, but when the actors present them, we see another side, so Shakespeare is saying that appearances can't be trusted at first, as we need seem them, for what they were like before.

Yet Horatio, who we see at first, he is a scholar and so the audience can trust him, and he does not put on an appearance, but when Hamlet is about to put on his "antic disposition", Horatio starts acting, just for Hamlet's sake.

Overall, Shakespeare is trying to make appearances in the middle-ground, as it can neither be good nor evil; it just depends on the character itself.

Without appearances, the characters wouldn't be as interesting as they would be, and they would only be presented as one-dimensional, when they should have three dimensions to it. He is also trying to show the audience that with appearances, we cannot judge a book by its cover. As appearances are seen as the corrupting Denmark through the "ear" and that it is a "prison", it covers all of that up, making it look normal, yet it is corrupted underneath.

As Horatio says "tis rotten in the state of Denmark", I believe that appearances are useful, but they can be trusted to a certain length, whereas if you completely trust it, then corruption would reign supreme. As each character is presented in the play all appear to be good and honest, making

it a hard for Hamlet to uncover the hidden truth about the nature of each character.