

Shakespeare's techniques in hamlet

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Passionately recommended by a majority, William Shakespeare's Hamlet is deemed credible, intricate, and intellectual by readers of all professions. In fact, not only is Hamlet said to be Shakespeare's greatest work, but it is often titled the greatest playwright of all time as well. Intermittently, however, do people recognize the fundamental flaws of the play.

Hamlet's lack of character development, sloppy structure, and an odd similarity to another Elizabethan tragedy—The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd— all prove that Hamlet does not even come close to living up to the credibility and extensive publicity assumed by many readers of Hamlet.

The character of Hamlet is praised for his deep, analytical thought and his complexity of emotions, but Hamlet is nothing more than an unstable, emotional ruin; in fact, all other characters in the play follow this lack of complexity too. There is not a single character in Hamlet who develops and becomes a round character. Throughout the entire play, Claudius remains an apathetic and corrupt villain, continuing his role as an antagonist. Claudius's character can be summed up by his orders to Horatio to stay close to Ophelia, saying " Follow her close, give her good watch, I pray you." (IV. V. 75). This quote shows Claudius's untrusting and scheming attitude. Horatio remains hesitant and cautious, making no dramatic decisions to better any given situation in the playwright. Ophelia and Gertrude are discarded of through death, and are arguably the characters with the most power, even though they are given the least attention. Although these women voice their conscious through reckless acts such as suicide, Ophelia drowning herself in a lake and Gertrude drinking a cup of poison, they remain silenced and hopeless throughout the play.

The most complex line Reynaldo has is reminding Polonius where he left off speaking, saying, "At ' closes in the consequence,' at ' friend or/ so,' and ' gentleman.'" (II. II. 52-53) Polonius, although he can be considered the most insightful of the characters, is still a flat character in that his careless nature results in the demise of himself and other characters—his intentions from the beginning. Even Hamlet, who is believed to be the main protagonist, remains ignorant and rash throughout the playwright. Hamlet's famous line, "To be, or not to be," (III. I. 56) is only grasped by the human mind when context is revealed, whether it is related to the play or the reader, otherwise, this quote is simply a conglomerate or gibberish. The only difference from Hamlet's initial outbursts of careless and destructive emotion after learning about the ghost of his father to the hasty duel scene is that Hamlet becomes justified in his ignorant decisions.

Chekhov's gun is a concept in literature that suggests that every event or scene in a story must be relevant, and unnecessary information should be removed for the sake of eliminating false promises. In other words, if a gun is hanging on the wall, the gun must be fired at some point in the writing, contributing to the plot. Shakespeare's Hamlet breaks this concept many times, resulting in a sloppy structure and unclear plot. The historical background regarding Fortinbras and Denmark mentioned in the beginning of the play seems to have been added for the sake of aiding Shakespeare in providing a framework for the play. The issue of Denmark is seldom addressed again. In fact, without Fortinbras, the play would arguably make more sense and be more focused on the plot of the play by removing an unnecessary character whose only purpose is to serve as a plot carrier. It

was also very unnecessary for Hamlet to travel to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern after Hamlet murdered Polonius. Not only did the trip draw away from the plot, but Claudius's intentions to betray Hamlet further by going as far as attempting to kill him could have been executed more efficiently. These multiple scenes hold no significance toward the plot and make the overall structure of the play less cohesive and sloppy because the audience has to work unnecessarily to follow a map of a storyline.

Chekhov's gun is not to be confused with foreshadowing, however.

Foreshadowing is a literary device that hints at events that may happen to spark the audience's interest. This is different from Chekhov's gun in that foreshadowing suggests an event will occur in the future in a vague manner, while Chekhov's gun guarantees said event. A few events, such as the death of Claudius, the death of Polonius, and Hamlet's unstable mentality are foreshadowed in Hamlet in a poor way. The Ghost's multiple returns suggest revenge will be sought, especially when Horatio proposes, "[the Ghost] bodes some strange eruption to our state." (I. I. 69) Polonius's death is directly foreshadowed when Polonius describes himself as having acted as Julius Caesar in a play, stating, "I was killed/ i' the Capitol; Brutus killed me." (III. II. 108-109)

And lastly, the alleged insanity of Hamlet is foreshadowed, almost given, on numerous accounts of Horatio and the Ghost warning Hamlet of the repercussions of seeking revenge. This includes when Horatio forewarns Hamlet by saying, "[the Ghost] might deprive your sovereignty of reason/ And draw you into madness." (I. IV. 73-74) It also includes when the Ghost

suggests Hamlet to "Taint not thy mind." (I. V. 85) While all foreshadowed events require analysis, Shakespeare's incidents of foreshadowing are straightforward; it is comparable to an infant boy who is hiding the fact that he got a new toy and his brother did not, from his brother. This creates an anti-climactic moment for each poor use of foreshadowing, furthering the weak structure of the play.

The Elizabethan era of literature consisted mostly of poetry, drama, and tragedies. Playwrights became popular in the higher, wealthier classes, and William Shakespeare was not the only notable author that came from this era. Another famous author was Thomas Kyd whose most well known playwright is *The Spanish Tragedy*—first performed in 1587, about 12 years before *Hamlet* was composed. Kyd's playwright follows a sultan who is motivated to murder a friend due to jealousy and revenge. *The Spanish Tragedy* holds characters similar to the ones present in *Hamlet*, such as a ghostly figure and a crucial protagonist named Horatio. Both Shakespeare's and Kyd's playwrights also show themes of mentally unstable characters and suspicion as well as paranoia. The two pieces' main characters, Hieronimo and Hamlet, do very little to resolve the situation and are indecisive, and both playwrights contain plays-within-a-play. Therefore, it is no doubt that Shakespeare had *The Spanish Tragedy* in mind when writing *Hamlet*.

All in all, Shakespeare's lack of depth in characters, clumsy framework, and what can be considered close to plagiarism of Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* all invoke *Hamlet* does not live up to its notability. Shakespeare's

techniques in writing Hamlet are sloppy and overrated, making this play not so much a magnum opus but rather a magnum flopus.