

# Hamlet: the dramatic significance of each soliloquy essay sample

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



Shakespearean Tragedy defines a soliloquy as a speech made by a character when he is alone on stage. In Shakespearean dramas, a soliloquy is actually a poem with lyrics in which are highly emotional or philosophic in content and poetic expression. A soliloquy may serve several purposes, such as revealing the mood or character of the speaker, revealing his opinion on specific topics and issues, creating suspense, revealing motives, and advancing the plot. Hamlet, a tragedy written by William Shakespeare is the story about Prince Hamlet whose father, the late King of Denmark, is murdered by his brother, Hamlet's uncle. The play revolves around Hamlet's anger and his choices about how to avenge his father's death. Throughout the play, Hamlet goes through seven soliloquies, all in which serve more than one dramatic significance. In each poetic speech, Hamlet reveals his character, creates an atmosphere, and advances the plot of the tragedy.

Initially, each soliloquy spoken by Hamlet communicates the personality that he holds. His characteristics are explored though the personal attacks geared towards himself for not acting on his morals, and the constant need that he has to confirm that his actions are correct. In Hamlet's first soliloquy, he explains why it is that he is so upset about everything that has happened thus far. Originally, Hamlet refers to the world as being useless and meaningless to him, comparing it to a business that is showing no progression, " How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable/ Seem to me all the uses of this world!" (I. ii. 133-134) Within this same soliloquy, Hamlet also expresses his feelings towards his mother's speedy marriage to his uncle, the current King of Denmark. " O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason/ Would have mourn'd longer-married with my uncle,/ My father's

brother – but no more like my father/ Than I to Hercules.” (I. ii. 150-152)

Hamlet feels as though his mother has performed an incestuous marriage, and with someone of such low class as his uncle.

Hamlet also says that although he feels this way about his mother’s decision, he will not say anything against her, “ But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue” (I. ii. 159). These words reveal Hamlet’s initial thoughts nearly two months after his father’s death, revealing not only his sadness for the loss of his father, but for the fact that his mother does not seem to care. Through them, he expresses his inner opinions, while maintaining a level of respect for his mother and uncle. During the whole of the play, Hamlet is faced with the task of avenging his father’s murder and more importantly, choosing whether death is more desirable than life. In Hamlet’s second soliloquy, he continues to show his indecisiveness and inability to say what is on his mind. In this speech, Hamlet reveals that he is a person who is not physically courageous, but mentally courageous. He says that in order to do what his father asks of him, he must remove all other distractions from his mind until his duties are fulfilled, “ And thy commandment all alone shall live/ Within the book and volume of my brain” (I. v. 102-103).

This particular line shows Hamlet’s commitment to his family and the respect that he has for his father, and mother, which was displayed prior. Moreover, it is evident that Hamlet has many personal conflicts with himself. In his third and fourth soliloquy, he once again displays his lack of confidence and despite his desire for revenge; he cannot surpass the moral consequence of murder. Specifically, in his third soliloquy, Hamlet’s sense of himself comes

from a condensed perception that he is a coward because he has not yet acted upon his father's wishes. "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" (II. ii. 535) Hamlet views himself as helpless and held back by his own conscience. Thus, he derives a plan to have his uncle admit his guilt through expression, ultimately ending his internal struggle.

"I'll have these players/ Play something like the murder of my father/ Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks" (II. ii. 581-583). With the help of the play and the actors, Hamlet will come to terms as to whether or not the ghost is actually his father or if it is the devil tempting him. This will help push Hamlet into making the decision to murder his uncle or not. Religion also plays a large role in Hamlet's life, throughout the play Hamlet refers to his religious views numerous times. In each of the soliloquies, Hamlet uses analogies and allusions to the bible and religion to get his point across. In the fifth soliloquy, Hamlet expands on his beliefs of life versus death. Through his use of words, Hamlet shows signs of being melancholy and going through despair. At this time of the play, Hamlet contemplates what is more desirable, "To be, or not to be, that is the question" (III. i. 56). Although Hamlet does not directly say that he no longer wants to live, he makes it clear that death is what he prefers.

Hamlet contests with himself whether the composed bearing of corruption is more noble than bold action, "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer/ The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,/ Or to take the arms against a sea of troubles/ And by opposing end them" (III. i. 57-60). This entire soliloquy shows that Hamlet is a man of reason; by beginning with a question and

evaluating both possible answers, he demonstrates his ability to comprehend the good and bad of each situation. Nevertheless, in his next soliloquy he reveals that he lacks a genuine character. Hamlet proclaims that in order to reach out to his mother, while still obeying his father's wishes, he will speak and act a different way than which he feels, " My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites" (III. iii. 381). Again, Hamlet shows through his words, his inability to say what he thinks. This is a flaw that Hamlet possesses, which inhibits others from knowing his true emotions, restricting them from reaching out. Hamlet's character is clearly displayed through each of his soliloquies. Due to his use of metaphors, analogies, allusions and rhetorical questions, Hamlet expands on his thought process and emotions, all while never stepping out of terms with those who he respects.

Each of Hamlet's soliloquies not only reveals his elaborate character, but they also establish the atmosphere of the play. Within each poetic speech, Hamlet sets the tone for the tragedy by use of specific words, metaphors, and heavy emphasis on the subject matter. When Hamlet delivers his first soliloquy, he uses words that create a very dark and bleak mood. " Fie on't, ah fie, ' tis an unweeded garden/ That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature" (I. ii. 135-136). As Hamlet describes the world around him, he alludes to the biblical Garden of Eden, referring to the betrayal that Adam and Eve committed against God due to temptation. Hamlet's use of words, " rank" and " gross" create a particular image and demonstrate the anger he possesses. Much like his first soliloquy, in the second speech that Hamlet makes, he also elaborates on the mood that he is currently in. Angrier than

before because of the news that ghost for has shared; Hamlet begins to create an even darker, depressing and frightful ambience.

With the exit of the ghost, Hamlet reveals his frustration with his surroundings, “ O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?/ And shall I couple hell?” (I. v. 92-93) The comparison that Hamlet makes between heaven and hell affirm the feelings he has on his environment. There is the one aspect of things, which all is well and those who he loves are happy. However, there is the other side of it, where all has gone wrong, and the people he thought he could trust are full of corruption and betrayal. “ O villain, villain, smiling damned villain!/ My tables. Meet it is I set it down/ That one may smile and smile, and be a villain” (I. v. 106-108). Hamlet’s anger and depression creates a feeling of sympathy from within, and before ending the soliloquy, Hamlet repeats the ghost’s final words. “ Adieu, adieu, remember me.” (I. v. 111) this repetition shows the importance of the initial encounter with the ghost, thus creating a deeper mood for the play.

The next time that Hamlet presents another soliloquy, the atmosphere of the play further develops. By this time, it is known in Elsinore that Hamlet is mad. However, the audience is aware that it is all just an act. Hamlet reveals that he is determined to avenge his father’s death, upon knowing that Claudius is a murdered. “ Had he the motive and the cue for passion/ That I have?” (II. ii. 546-547) This line allows the audience to understand Hamlet as a character better. It is evident in his words that he is passionate about his duties and is much more willing to act than his uncle could ever be. Hamlet exposes his desire to do what he thinks is right, regardless of the fact that he

is still unsure of what he actually witnessed. “ The spirit that I have seen/  
May be a devil, and the devil hath power” (II. ii. 585-586). While Hamlet is certain that the ghost was truly his father after death, the uncertainty still lies within him.

Hamlet allows for the audience to feel sorry for him by referencing to the devil and the power that it has. In act three, Hamlet performs his forth soliloquy which revels a deeper side to the character. During the speech, Hamlet discusses the suffering and pandemonium that he is facing, as well as the concept of which is more attractive: life or death. As Hamlet refers to death as a peaceful sleep, filled with dreams, he creates a soft and desired atmosphere within the scene. “ To die, to sleep/ To sleep, perchance to dream” (III. i. 64-65). Hamlet continues to elaborate on his morals, which allows for the audience to relate to the character further. Finally, Hamlet make a decision, and to end the soliloquy, Hamlet justifies the choice, “ Be all my sins remember’d,” (III. i. 90)

#### Works Cited

Shakespeare, William, and Roma Gill. Hamlet. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992. Print.