

# Polonius' speech to his son

Literature



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Section/# Polonius Advice - Timeless Fatherly Counsel Whereas fathers have been giving their sons and daughters advice since the dawn of time, the advice that William Shakespeare's character Polonius gave to his son Laertes upon the latter's departure to pursue higher education in France is perhaps one of the most timeless and enduring of Hamlet's soliloquies. As such, the soliloquy discusses a host of useful/sage fatherly advice imparted to a young man who is no doubt opinionated, impetuous, and likely to remember the advice that his father gave him only long after the benefit of the words could have effected key changes; nevertheless, the advice itself is timeless. As a means of understanding this, this brief essay will attempt to point to the key factors that make Polonius' speech as relevant to today's youth, preparing to embark on their own destinies, as it was to the youths in Shakespeare's own times. In this way, the advice that Polonius offers his son is a type of timeless advice that resonates with the youth of today as well as the youth long before Shakespeare's time (Stimpson 97). Whereas people are often tempted to view societal conventions as outdated soon after they are formed, it is the belief of this author that the words used in Shakespeare's rendition of Polonius' speech do not represent societal conventions but rather the nature of humanity.

One of the first thoughts that Polonius attempts to convey to his son is that he should be slow to speak and quick to listen. Such an advice is nothing new; however, it is nonetheless relevant and important - especially for a likely opinionated young man embarking on higher education (Shakespeare 43). Similarly, Polonius goes on to warn against the danger of having a loose tongue and/or of giving oneself too easily to argument or confrontation.

Likewise, the speech goes on to warn Laertes regarding the nature of

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friendship, the honor of simplicity, the necessity of frugality, and the ultimate glory of being honest and true to what one believes. Regardless of the time that has passed since these words were penned, the nature of their instruction and the appropriate knowledge that they tend to impart to the reader helps him/her to understand that the counsel that Polonius gives to his son is truly as applicable today as it was to Shakespeare's own time and own audience (Sterling 2).

The fact of the matter is that the nature of these words of wisdom transcend the time in which they were written and have an almost magical ability to go beyond the bounds of Shakespeare's drama and grasp at the very heart of the difficult transition that young individuals must make between childhood and adulthood. In many aspects such a transition engenders fundamental choices with regards to morality, self esteem, identity, key choices, and values. As such, regardless of the era, the level of technological change, or societal evolution that has come to pass in the intervening hundreds of years since the speech itself was penned, the words themselves are still equally as applicable to the youth of today as they were in such a time as it was written.

#### Works Cited

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