

Melancholy, anger to  
ophelia because even  
though many



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Melancholy, grief, and madness have enlarged the works of a great many playwrights, and Shakespeare is not an exception. The mechanical regularities of such emotional maladies as they are presented within Hamlet, not only allow his audience to sympathize with the tragic prince Hamlet, but to provide the very complexities necessary in understanding the tragedy of his, ironically similar, lady Ophelia as well. It is the poor Ophelia who suffers at her lover's discretion because of decisions she was obligated to make. Hamlet provides his own self-torture and does fall victim to depression and grief, however, his madness is fictitious.

They each share a common connection: the loss of a parental figure. Hamlet loses his father as a result of a horrible murder, as does Ophelia. Her situation is more severe because it is her lover whom murders her father and all of her hopes for her future as well. Ultimately, it is also more harmful to her character and causes her melancholy and grief to quickly turn to madness. Critics argue that Hamlet has the first reason to be hurt by Ophelia because she follows her father's wishes regarding Hamlet's true intentions for their beginning love. In Act 3, Hamlet begins with his spiteful sarcasm toward her. "I humbly thank you, well, well, well," he says to her regarding her initial bantering.

(III, i, 101) Before this scene, he has learned that the King and Polonius have established a plan to make reason of his unusual and grief-stricken behavior. Hamlet is well aware that this plan merely uses Ophelia as a tool, and as such, she does not have much option of refusing without angering her father and the conniving King as well. Hamlet readily refuses that he cared

for her. He tells her and all of his uninvited listeners, "No, not I, I never gave you aught" (III, i, 105).

Some critics stress, as does J. Dover Wilson, that Hamlet has a right to direct his anger to Ophelia because even though many critics "in their sympathy with Ophelia have forgotten that it is not Hamlet who has 'repelled' her, but she him" (Wilson 159). But it is possible that Wilson does not see the possible harm to Ophelia if she were to disobey the authority of her father and the king. (i. e. her father and her king).

She is undeniably caught in a trap that has been laid, in part, by her lover whom she loves and idealizes. Her shock is genuine when Hamlet demands "get thee to a nunnery" (III, i, 131). The implication of the dual meaning of "nunnery" is enough itself to make her run malcontented from her prince, and it is the beginning of her madness as well. Hamlet's melancholy causes and provokes him to show manic-depressive actions while Ophelia's state of mind is much more overwhelming and painful. "Shakespeare is ambiguous about the reality of Hamlet's insanity and depicts him as on the border, fluctuating between sanity and madness" (Lidz 156).

Hamlet mourns for his father, but it is the bitterness and ill-will that he harbors towards his mother for her hasty marriage to his uncle that is his most recurring occupation. His thoughts of Ophelia are secondary at best. When it happens that Hamlet accidentally slays Polonius, he does not appear to be thinking of the potential effect of his actions on Ophelia.

Hamlet has sealed her fate, and along with the "vacillations in his attitude and behavior toward her could not but be extremely unsettling to the

<https://assignbuster.com/melancholy-anger-to-ophelia-because-even-though-many/>

very young woman who idolized him" she does not have much in the way that is positive for her (Lidz 157). Throughout the entire murder scene in Act 3, Scene 4, Hamlet does not remark about the damage he has done to Ophelia. His emotional upswing is devoted entirely to his mother, and while his emotions are not an imitation, he does admit that he "essentially is not in madness, / But mad in craft" (lines 187-188). Ophelia is then left to mourn her father, but it is not his death alone that spurs her insanity.

Her predicament is such that she is forced to fear and hate her father's murder who is also her lover and the one person to whom all of her future hopes were pinned - Prince Hamlet." Her entire orientation to the future has suddenly been destroyed," and with her brother gone, Ophelia has no one to turn to for comfort (Lidz 157). Hamlet then delves further into his manic feigned madness