

# Hamlet

Literature



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Hamlet: The Impact of the Ghost Without the ghost of Hamlet's father, this play would have been an utter failure. It is his death, which was not known to be murder at the beginning of the play, and its avenging around which the entire play revolves. It is important that the audience knows that this was a good man in order for them to identify with him and with Hamlet. Otherwise the theme and tone of the play could not be accomplished. Even though the murder of a king is illegal, and the murderer should be punished, if the murdered king was a bad man or a cruel ruler it is nearly impossible to raise emotional involvement or support for justice or vengeance in the minds of the audience, since they would be more sympathetic to the murderer.

At the beginning of the play we see the watchmen changing shift and then the ghost appears. The watchmen speak of the late king as a hero and speak to the ghost with respect, but the ghost hastens away. Later, Horatio tells Hamlet of the sighting and the good opinion of Hamlet's father is reinforced. Hamlet tells Horatio he will be there for the next probably sighting.

Hamlet is there when the ghost of his father reappears. The Ghost tells him that he was sleeping, as customary, in the orchard when his brother, Hamlet's uncle, poured poison in his ear, and he never woke. The story given out was that the king was bitten by a snake while sleeping in the orchard.

Sleeping within my orchard,  
My custom always of the afternoon,  
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,  
And in the porches of my ears did pour  
The leperous distilment; whose effect  
Holds such an enmity with blood of man

That swift as quicksilver it courses through  
The natural gates and alleys of the body,  
And with a sudden vigour doth posset  
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine;  
And a most instant tetter barkd about,  
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,  
All my smooth body.

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brothers hand  
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatchd:  
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,  
Unhouseld, disappointed, unaneld,  
No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
With all my imperfections on my head:  
O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!  
If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;  
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be  
A couch for luxury and damned incest.

(Act I Scene IV)

The ghost leaves and only appears again very briefly in the third act when Hamlet questions his mother. In many productions the audience does not see the ghost then, but only hears the voice. The queen neither sees nor hears the ghost.

Yet, this ghost is always present as it is his death that is behind every action of the play. He was a fair king and his brother, who murdered him and stole the queen, is treacherous, cunning and greedy. The ghost is also what

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continuously delays action on the part of Hamlet as he tries to make sure that he is doing what is right, and has not been deceived by a demon. Hamlet does not find it hard to believe his uncle is a murderer and he certainly does not want to believe that his mother was a party to the deed. He even thinks that maybe his father also is not sure, since the ghost insisted that Hamlet was not to punish her, but to "leave her to heaven". Therefore Hamlet is careful to identify friend and foe all through acts two and three. He does not act on anything until he is certain of the verity of his knowledge.

The play ends with the deaths of both the king and queen and Hamlet himself. However, Denmark has been set to rights and all villains were punished and all righteous having lands and property restored.