

Revenge comes with a price

Literature, British Literature



Revenge Comes with a Price By Matt Greenfield In the play Hamlet: Prince of Denmark by William Shakespeare three of the characters are faced with avenging their fathers' deaths, which are Hamlet, Laertes, and Fortinbras. These three character's actions are guided solely by their emotions to take revenge on their father's deaths. Even though all three of these characters get their revenge, Fortinbras is the only one to make it out alive. Hamlet with his hesitance, Laertes with his rashness, and Fortinbras with his deceitful planning all had their own reason, method, and outcome for their revenge of their fathers. Hamlet's hesitance to revenge his father is the most detailed revenge in the play of all the characters. Upon his arrival to Denmark to claim his kingdom, Lord Hamlet is informed that his mother is marrying his father's brother. Hamlet soon then finds out that it was his uncle that killed his father to take his place as king " Thus was [Hamlet's Father], sleeping, by a brother's hand/ Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd" (1. 5. 75-76). Feeling his father's pain, Hamlet pretend his uncle is near " So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word;/ It is " Adieu, adieu! Remember me. "" swearing this as he's furious with anger (1. 5. 111-112). Knowing this, Hamlet devises a clever but hesitant plan to avenge his father and take back his kingdom as the rightful heir of his father's throne. Firstly Hamlet decides that he will give the impression he's mad or sick. Telling his only trustworthy friend no matter " How strange or odd" he acts, he assures him it's all a part of the plan (1. 5. 171). Knowing that Polonius reports to the king and queen on everything, Hamlet goes to Polonius daughter Ophelia to act out his craziness and start the rumors of his madness. Hamlet then finds an actor for a play that's going to be shown and ask him to " study a speech of some

dozen or sixteen lines/ which [he] would set down and insert" in to the play (2. 2. 545-546). Adding these extra lines, Hamlet is trying to show the audience what really happened to King Hamlet and get a reaction out of his uncle and mother. Hamlet then informs his uncle that the name of the play is " The Mouse-trap" to deepen his uncle's thoughts on this matter, which is Hamlet's way of showing that he knows what happen, but at the same is not a smart move on his part (3. 2. 239). Hesitant Hamlet finds his uncle luckily praying at an alter, later on in act three, giving him the perfect chance to kill his uncle, but decides to kill him " When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage" (3. 4. 89). Hamlet's plan comes to a short pause when he takes a short trip to England for mistakenly stabbing Polonius thinking it' s his uncle or someone spying on him and his mother. Resuming upon his return, Hamlet is forced to fight Laertis. The outcome of Hamlet's revenge was not at all what he intended, but he had his revenge none the less. Sending his two best friends from childhood (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) to their deaths, hamlet felt no regret for they had been helping his uncle. Hamlet had lost his mother, from his uncle's thirst for power, and the love of his life, Ophelia, due to Lord Hamlet acting crazy and not talking to her. At the cost of all his loved ones bloodshed, Hamlet took his revenge by forcing his uncle to drink the same poison that took his mother's life and hearing his last words " follow my mother" (5. 2. 329). Laertis' rash reason for revenge of his father, Polonius, is blamed solely on Hamlet. Worried about spies, Hamlet is quick to react and kill Laertis' father after hearing " What, ho! Help! " from behind a curtain (3. 4. 23). Laertis also blames Hamlet for the death of his sister, Ophelia, who had killed herself after father being killed and thinking that

Hamlet was mad and had no love for her. Working with the Laertis, the king comes up with a plan to kill Hamlet. They decide that Laertis will challenge Hamlet to a fencing match upon his return. With no chance for Hamlet to decline, Laertis must honor his father. Little does Hamlet know that, Laertis' sword will be dipped in poison so deadly that if " it draws blood no [plaster] so rare,/ Collected from all [herbs] that have virtue/ Under the moon, can save the thing for death" (4. 7. 143-145). While Hamlet lies there and dies, everyone will think it was a mishap where " no wind of blame shall breath" and " even his mother shall uncharged the practice/ And call it accident" (4. 7. 65-67). Ending the life of Hamlet, Laertis will have his revenge while being used by the king at the same time. Laertis' plan for the revenge of his father seems flawless but the outcome proves otherwise from his rash actions. Not being able to land a hit on Hamlet, Laertis wounds Hamlet at the end of one of the rounds. Leading to a scuffle, Hamlet somehow ends up with the poisoned sword and wounding Laertis as crowd tries to " Part them! " (5. 2. 306). Avenging his father and sister by killing Hamlet, Laertis signed his own death certificate with the poisoning of his own sword. Fortinbras on the other hand has deceivingly planned the revenge of his father ever since Old Hamlet killed Old Fortinbras, which happen to be the day Hamlet was born. Old Hamlet had " slay this Fortinbras" leader of Norway at the time and seized some of their land (1. 1. 86). With Norway missing some land, Fortinbras wanted to take it back and kill Hamlet as revenge and to honor his father. Fortinbras had been planning to take back his land and avenge his father. Letting Fortinbras "[gather] up a list of lawless [desperadoes]" in the outskirts of Norway, his uncle thought they were " To be a preparation "

against the Polack" (1. 2. 1, 2. 98, 63). Fortinbras's uncle soon found out what he was really planning and demanded that he shall go with the plan " as before, against the Polack" (2. 2. 75). They sent a message to Hamlet's uncle asking for a " quiet pass/ Through [their] dominions for this enterprise" (2. 2. 77-78). Even though Fortinbras' plans were to attack Denmark when they arrive, he deceives his uncle to secure his revenge. Fortinbras gain his revenge without lifting a finger and with no bloodshed of his men. Hamlet tells Horatio right before he dies that "[he] do prophesy th' election lights/ On Fortinbras" (5. 2. 358-359). Showing up at the end to see his enemies die, Fortinbras was handed his land back. Fortinbras wasn't able to avenge his father himself, but he reclaimed his land and forgave Hamlet. Being the only one to survive in this deadly game of revenge, Fortinbras gives Hamlet a royal burial. Hamlet, Laertis, and Fortinbras all had their own reason, method, and outcome for the revenge of their fathers. Leading to two of their downfalls, Hamlet and Laertis choices were wrongly guided by their emotions. In the end they all received what they really wanted, but with only Fortinbras still living. In saying that if you ever going look for revenge be sure to dig two graves, unless you're Fortinbras. Works Cited Shakespeare, William. Hamlet: Prince of Denmark. Rpt. In The Bedford Introduction to Drama. 6th Ed. Lee A. Jacobus. St. Martin's Press: New York, NY, 2009. 340-390.