

Hamlet and ophelia comparison essay sample

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Hamlet and Ophelia are linked by many common characteristics, not the least of which is their madness. While Hamlet's madness seems to be feigned, Ophelia is truly crazy. The odd thing about their predicament is that they each drive each other more fully into the depths of illness. One of Hamlet's most famous lines is when he tells the Queen: "Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know not 'seems.'" Hamlet is saying that he does not know what it is to pretend, he only knows what it is to be. This is the main question surrounding Hamlet in the play, is he feigning his madness, or is it real? After confronting the Ghost, Hamlet tells his friends that he is going to act mad in public, and that they should not worry for he is not really crazy at all. There is a common belief in these days that when someone tells a lie and firmly believes it they start to live that lie. Maybe this is true with Hamlet- he acts truly mad in public (even his mother believes it) that possibly he acts mad in private too. After Polonius tells Ophelia to repel Hamlet's letters, Hamlet enters Ophelia's room and looks at her with such a piteous and saddened face that even Ophelia begins to think there is something wrong with him. Shortly after that Hamlet encounters Polonius in a corridor and harasses him and says crazy things. In an aside Polonius says, "Though this be madness, yet there is method in't." In another famous line, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ask Hamlet about his madness, and he replies, "I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw." In the beginning Hamlet says he does not know how to pretend, so one could argue that either he was lying and is a very good play-actor with his madness; or he really does not know how to act and is truly mad. Hamlet does go about talking overmuch about writing and acting, and even

goes so far as to put a little vignette in the play of Hecuba, and tells the actors how to do their job. Is Hamlet an actor telling other actors how to act, or is he a crazy fool presuming too much? Whilst Hamlet is off trying to make the world think he is crazy, Ophelia has a real breakdown of her own. Ophelia goes mad for two reasons mostly- she is forced to deny Hamlet her affection (and he therefore denies her), and Hamlet slays her father. Ophelia is simply an unwitting pawn in everyone else's traps; she cannot do anything to stop it, and she wouldn't know how if she could. Polonius demands that she not see Hamlet any longer, and return all of his letters.

When Ophelia follows her father's orders, Hamlet is angered and pretends that he never wrote her letters or gave her any of his affection. This seems to be the beginning of Ophelia's sadness mostly because she really did love Hamlet, and she believed that he loved her as much. In Act III, scene , Ophelia and Hamlet have their famous argument; with Hamlet telling Ophelia to get to a nunnery, and Ophelia saying to herself, " O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!" Shortly after that (Act III, scene ii) the play begins, with Ophelia commenting, "'Tis brief, my lord." And Hamlet replies, " As a woman's love." They play off of each other, and each is scorned because they were in love, and each comment drives them further into madness.

The end of Ophelia's stretched sanity comes when she discovers Hamlet has slain her father. When Ophelia and the Queen meet after Ophelia's madness, a serving-woman tells the Queen, " She [Ophelia] is importunate, indeed distract. Her mood will needs be pitied." Ophelia has been talking to no one, and muttering things, and singing songs she does not know the meaning of.

She talks about her father without knowing no one is listening, and eventually Ophelia drowns in a shallow creek with no one to help her. While Hamlet is simply pretending to be crazy in hopes to catch Claudius, Ophelia really has gone mad, mostly because of Hamlet. These two “ young” nobles who once were in love, drove each other more fully into madness, and could not help themselves.