

Violent acts in the tragedy "hamlet"

Literature, British Literature



When death hits a family its always one person in the family wanting revenge. Prince Hamlet is that family member that wants revenge for a death in his family. In the play Hamlet there are several deaths. The King death had the most impact on Hamlet because that was his father. A vicious, violent way to make oneself feel better about an offense against them.

Throughout the tragedy of Hamlet revenge is a recurring theme, amongst all the characters. Whether this revenge is in physical form, or mental form, it is equally hurtful. Mahatma Ghandi said, An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind. Ghandi is literally saying that if one person commits a revengeful act, it will create a continuing reaction of bitterness and violence throughout everyone. This quote is highly significant throughout the duration of Hamlet, as it portrays almost precisely, both the plotline of the story, as well as the conclusion. From the murder of King Hamlet to the murder of Prince Hamlet the tragedy is filled with violent acts of revenge.

The theme of vengeance is apparent within the tragedy before the tragedy even begins. King Fortinbras is defeated by King Hamlet, leaving Prince Fortinbras orphaned. This naturally brings about bitterness between Prince Fortinbras and King Hamlet. Prince Fortinbras is angry, within reason. His father was just killed, his lands stolen, and now he is the person to whom all of the duty is left. These feelings lead Fortinbras to a state of angered reactions. He prepares an army to march into Poland and Denmark to recover the lands that his father had lost. He acts, leaving the rest of his life behind, and marching over to get retaliation against the man who killed his father. He sets his mind on what he must do, and sets off, away from his home, in a strong, purposeful manner. When Fortinbras prepares to march

through Denmark, his address to King Claudius is direct, purposeful, and unemotional. Captain, from me greet the Danish king. Tell him that by his license Fortinbras craves the conveyance of a promised march over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous. If that his Majesty would aught with us, we shall express our duty in his eye; And let him know so. (Act 4, Scene 4, Lines1-7)

The tone of this quote is very concise, clear and to the point. Fortinbras is clearly not going to take no for an answer from anyone or anything.

Fortinbras has learned the ways of manipulation and has learned how to get what he wants. He will work as hard as he can to avenge his father and take back the lands that were taken prior to his death. This is only the first of many occurrences of vengeance, one that is seemingly insignificant, but that is underlying throughout the progression of the play. The murder of King Hamlet by Claudius is the initial act of revenge that causes many of the others to occur. Serpents are typically known as wicked and scheming creatures, in the same way that Claudius plot against his brother is evil and manipulative. Through the murder of King Hamlet, Claudius wishes to achieve goals he himself has always hoped for, and instead of hard work to achieve these goals, he simply kills his brother and steals his wife, a clearly serpentine action. Through the word *Вґњstingвґќ* the ghost is trying to point out to Hamlet that King Hamlet was poisoned, murdered, and that this murderer had stolen the crown from him, and now sat upon his throne feasting upon joy and happiness that he in no way deserves. Such an action from a man Hamlet had once revered, has spurred such anger and spite

within the Prince that he must act. He begins to plot his revenge, the ways in which he will get back at Claudius.

Hamlet's vengefulness is quite extreme throughout the tragedy, which is reasonable. Hamlet has lost a father, and seemingly an uncle and a mother. When Hamlet says, "A little more than kin, but less than kind," (Act 2, Scene 1, Line 67) he is referring to not only his uncle, but to his mother as well. Claudius, though he is both Hamlet's uncle, as well as his stepfather, is no friend to Hamlet; he executed his father, and treated Hamlet like nothing more significant than dust. Hamlet acknowledges that Claudius is an enemy, simply because of the hastiness of his mother's marriage, which makes him suspicious from the time he arrives back from Wittenberg, where he was attending school. Hamlet is a genius character and is intelligent enough to realize that his uncle is a devious man, and that he is no longer a man that Hamlet could confide in or even get along with. Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, is a clueless woman, she is unaware of Claudius' murder, and she is unaware of the real reason behind Hamlet's anger. Hamlet, like any son, had always looked up to his mother, admired her, and respected her, however this respect and admiration is gone when he returns from school to find her married, only days after his father's death.

Hamlet realizes that he can no longer trust his mother, and that she is no more related to him than Claudius now that they are married. Hamlet makes the choice to requite his father's death by striking out on Claudius and Gertrude. Hamlet chooses to kill Claudius, following the statement, "an eye for an eye." If Claudius can take a life, then he can also lose a life. A life for a

life. Though it takes Hamlet almost the entire play to take Claudius' life, eventually injuring him with the poisoned sword, Hamlet's success is sweet, he has avenged his father, though now there are two men dead instead of one, and the chain has begun. Hamlet feels that he must also point out to his mother all the misdeeds she has performed against his dead father. He feels that it was horrible for his mother to have married so quickly after the funeral, and when his mother calls him into her bedroom, he prepares to hurt her, to cut her as deeply as he can, though only using words as his weapon. (Act 3, Scene 2, Lines 430-431).

Hamlet, though he still loves his mother deep within his heart, knows that what she has done is wrong, and that she must be informed, and properly punished for what she has done. Another way in which Hamlet gets revenge upon both Gertrude and Claudius is by going crazy. It appears Hamlet is far too intelligent to have gone crazy. He is a brilliant actor, and it appears Hamlet was really acting crazy, to get back at the King and Queen for having gotten married so hastily. By going crazy Hamlet instills fear within his mother that he has cracked under the pressure of the hasty marriage, perhaps making Gertrude have second thoughts about such a quick choice of a husband. Gertrude and Claudius certainly get their repayment in the conclusion, Gertrude's foolishness, and Hamlet's eventual strong will to kill Claudius, show through, and both Gertrude and Claudius end up dead. Hamlet slowly takes an eye for an eye, leaving more and more blind people in his wake.

The mysteries surrounding Ophelia are profound; however, the theory of revenge pulls it together quite easily. When Ophelia goes crazy, she has

clearly hit her limit, she has no clue what is going on, the love of her life has told her to leave and go to a brothel, and this same man then killed her father. She is distraught, confused, upset, and most likely angry. When Ophelia is out by the river creating garlands of flowers, she is consciously being dangerous, pushing her limits, reaching out on limbs that cannot support her. Her spontaneous death seems almost suicidal, purposeful, yet careless. Gertrude describes her death, how she came to be in the water, her dresses holding her up, and yet, Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds, as one incapable of her own distress. But long it could not be till that her garments, heavy with their drink, pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay to muddy death. (Act 4, Scene 7, Lines 202-208)

The way that Ophelia is simply laying in the water is relaxed, as though she is waiting for something, perhaps her death. Gertrude states that she is one incapable of her own distress, or she is simply too crazy to realize that she is drowning. However, is this true? Perhaps she is simply calm before the storm, waiting for her muddy death to come, to remove her from the world that she no longer wished to live in. If Ophelia had indeed killed herself, by drowning in the river, it is likely that this was to get revenge on Hamlet. Ophelia knew that Hamlet had loved her, at least once upon a time, and she knew that if she died he would feel horrible, the same way she must have felt after he so brutally denied her only days before. Hamlet was the cause of this violent, self-imposed, act of revenge, though unintentionally, and this action led to more and more acts of retribution, expanding the world of the blind, a case of an eye for an eye that has led to multiple deaths in Denmark.

Finally, after the death of both his sister, Ophelia, and his father, Polonius, Laertes comes into play, with his sword in hand and an adamant mind. Ophelia death is the point where it seems Laertes can handle no more. He has reached his breaking point. Laertes wants to avenge the death of his father, which he deems unnecessary, and extremely questionable, as well as the death of his sister, which appears to have been Hamlet fault as well. Laertes is the only man left of his family, the only person who has yet to die in a cruel, unnatural way. Laertes feels, as any brother would, that he has been abandoned, left alone, and that the only way to make himself feel better, is to kill the man that murdered his family. Laertes gives into the king pressure to battle Hamlet, and after much scuffle, Laertes is successful in the killing of Hamlet, avenging his family, though hurting himself as well. When he tried to get revenge, he only hurt himself as well, things would have been better off left alone, and Laertes catches onto this as he is dying, saying, Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. Mine and my father death come not upon thee, nor thine on mine. ♫ (Act 5, Scene 2, Lines 361-363)

Laertes is the only man within the play to catch on that a continuing cycle of revenge will help no one and nothing that eventually it must stop. And with the death of Laertes and Hamlet, the world goes blind. All that was left of the three families has been buried in the ground. An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind, Ghandi said, to show how revenge will not end once it has begun. Throughout Hamlet this theme is addressed, extremely clearly, and the conclusion, the death of so many characters, many due to revenge, shows how a world filled with extensive revenge cannot exist as a world at all. Hamlet is a deep philosophical story, however, the theme of revenge lies

just below the surface, if you look at all of the deaths, you may see that there was a high degree of hatred, bitterness, and anger throughout Denmark.