

Drama hamlet by
william
shakespeare(persuas
ive reflective
sesponse)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Drama hamlet by william shakespeare(persuasive/reflective sesponse)

Hamlet's Insanity For most of us, the idea of insanity is very uncomfortable to think about. Imagine how much more difficult it must be to write about, assuming the mind of the insane while lucidly and logically developing a plot. Yet this is exactly what Shakespeare does in his presentation of Hamlet in the play that carries his name. The story is familiar to most of us. Hamlet, the young prince of Denmark, learns from the ghost of his recently deceased father that his uncle, now King Claudius and Hamlet's new step-dad through marriage to Queen Gertrude, was the old king's murderer. Not sure of his own sanity (he is seeing things after all), Hamlet decides to pretend insanity as a means of discovering the truth. The main question, then, is whether Hamlet is pretending insanity as he thinks or has merely given in to his insanity as evidenced in that he's seeing ghosts. While this could be argued either way, Shakespeare provides hints through his use of language that there is much reason behind Hamlet's mindlessness.

The doubt surrounding Hamlet's sanity is introduced not only in the fact that he is seeing things, but also in the language itself. The first time he speaks, it is in secret as an aside to himself and is intended to point out the divisions in his character: "a little more than kin, and less than kind!" (I, ii). A sane man might do this as the only means of a pre-technological actor to express his character's thoughts to a listening audience while an insane man might do this in the beginning stages of his illness. He is always surrounded by double meanings, such as when he tells Claudius "I am too much in the sun" (I, ii) referring that he is getting too much attention and that he is referred to too

familiarly as a 'son'. This tends to confuse things, making it difficult to determine for sure whether he is sane.

However, the language that confuses things also serves to clear them up. This is first presented in the quick ability Hamlet has to turn a phrase as in the quotes above indicating a quick mind actively engaged in the realities of the present. Hamlet also demonstrates his ability to think rationally. When he's told about the ghost, Hamlet asks rational, logical questions that enable him to quickly assess the truth of Horatio's statements, the probable reality of the apparition and best course of action. Over and over again, Hamlet proves himself remarkably astute in his observations, just as he appears in the beginning. Since we see none of the linguistic degeneration that characterizes mental decline in some of Shakespeare's other plays, we can reasonably conclude that Hamlet is definitely not insane.

Ensuring that this conclusion is reached, Shakespeare enables his audience to compare the witty commentary of Hamlet's sane mind with the wide ramblings of Ophelia's following his rejection of her. Both of these characters start the play as educated and reasonably intelligent as they exchange witticisms with others. Although the language of Hamlet's insanity is manifested in bluntly true barbs directed at his enemies, Ophelia's insanity is sharply marked by changes in her language. She speaks to the queen asking "Where is the beautiful majesty of Denmark?" (IV, v). Without worrying about an answer, she begins singing songs about flowers and then tells the king "They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be." (IV, v). Where her phrases tend to make no sense in any means and her songs are out of place in the context of the conversations being held, Hamlet is always able to follow the train of thought

<https://assignbuster.com/drama-hamlet-by-william-shakespearepersuasivereflexive-response/>

of others around him.

Shakespeare's careful use of language skillfully leads us to constantly question the sanity of his main character, but yet continuously reassures us that Hamlet is indeed very sane. His use of language, his consistent ability to stay true to his course and his final success in denouncing the king demonstrate that he had a purpose, a will and a logical course of action. This is compared against the actions of Ophelia, who is not capable of participating in a simple conversation, has no purpose and no final triumph following the onset of her madness.

Works Cited

Shakespeare, William. Hamlet. The Complete Pelican Shakespeare. New York: Viking, 1969, pp. 930-976.