
A Study Of The Complexity Of Hamlet's Mind As Illustrated In Hamlet, A Play By Shakespeare

What is Hamlet Thinking?

Hamlet has had more than his fair share of rough experiences including losing his father, his mother marrying his uncle, living to match the standards that his great father has set, plotting to avenge his father's death, and being betrayed by women. These experiences can twist and churn a sane man's mind considerably. Inside the mind of Hamlet, there are four categories of feelings that drive his odd behavior and dark actions.

Inside one crevice of the prince's mind there are feelings of despair, depression, and a desperate need for death. These feelings have existed deep in Hamlet's mind since he began mourning his father's death, "Oh, that this too sullied flesh would melt, /... that the Everlasting had not fixed / His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!" (Ham.1.2.128-132). In this soliloquy, Hamlet expresses his desperate need for his life to end here. He states that he wishes God had not made suicide a sin so he could end his terrible life and be taken to heaven to receive some sort of salvation. Hamlet's thoughts of suicide can be associated with depression and despair. These negative emotions drive Hamlet to become a negative person, and the death of his father is the most influential cause of his negative feelings. Digging further into Hamlet's mind, one of the other causes is his belief that he is unable to fill his father's shoes. Old Hamlet was a phenomenal king in Hamlet's mind and it's quite possible that Hamlet doubts that he would be considered this if he were to become king. "So excellent a king, that was to this/ Hyperion to a satyr" (Ham.1.2.139-140). Here, Hamlet compares his father to Claudius explicitly but he might be comparing himself as well implicitly. With Old Hamlet being an unmatched king, Hamlet considers anyone that follows him unable to compete with his greatness. This includes Young Hamlet himself. His thoughts of suicide brew because he is convinced he doesn't deserve to live at all if he is unable to fill the shoes of his father.

Hamlet's brain also contains emotions completely different than the ones of death and despair or self-doubt. There is a niche that contains his love. Hamlet had a grand amount of love, but throughout the play it was drained as his loved ones turned to betrayal. The love he carried for Ophelia supposedly unsurpassed "Forty thousand brothers / could not with all their quantity of love / Make up [his] sum" (Ham.5.1.272-274). Later, Ophelia, his only love left him broken hearted and he lashed hatred on her up until her death, a few months later. Gertrude also dissolves Hamlet's love by marrying his uncle shortly after his father passes. This makes his blood boil because he grew up believing his parents carried an unbreakable bond. His idea of

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love and marriage was greatly influenced by this. When Gertrude married Claudius, his belief was shattered and with his weighted heart, he grew a hatred for his once beloved mother, “the Queen, your husband’s brother’s wife, / and--would it were not so!--you are my mother.” (Ham.3.4.16-17) It should be noted that it’s not just women that Hamlet has lost faith in and love for; two great friends that he has known since he was a child also stab him in the back. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are paid by his uncle to find out what is wrong with him. This is the reason that he doesn't feel all that bad when he kills them by messing with Claudius' letter. This explains Hamlet's mental-like actions of insulting Ophelia at the play, calling his own mother a whore, and being the reason two of his friends are murdered.

Hamlet's niche of love has altered so much that it nearly resembles the part of his mind containing immoral thoughts revenge, murder, and bloodshed. These are not necessarily a result, however these feelings are brought up because of his encounter with the ghost of Old Hamlet, who tells Hamlet to kill his uncle. His feelings for Claudius aside, this is not only an act of treason but he would be killing a member of his family. This crevice now obtains fear and self-doubt. Hamlet understands the task, but it takes him forever to go through with it because he is terrified. The prince tries to repress this by continuously reminding himself to have bloody thoughts and live with the sole purpose of avenging his father. “I should have fatted all the region / kites / With this slave’s offal” (Ham.2.2.538-540). Here he is saying that he should have already slaughtered his uncle to such an extent that vultures could feast on him. During the same soliloquy, he calls himself a coward and a “rogue and peasant slave” because his insecurities make him afraid of committing this crime.

Hamlet's mind is very complex. It's crevices contain: feeling of death, despair, and suicide; immoral thoughts of revenge, murder, and bloodshed; fear and self-doubt; and a great amount of love that he can't share because the people around him don't deserve it. This mix of complex emotions and thoughts perfectly explain the reason for Hamlet being the way he is.

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