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# An Analysis of the Theme of Revenge in Hamlet by William Shakespeare

## Revenge in Hamlet

In modern times justice is virtually always served. Most crimes and wrong doings are reprimanded and punishments are given. Yes, there are the scarce few who go above and beyond the law to take matters into their own hands. But it is the co formality of the law and of justice that keep the world from becoming chaotic. Revenge is thought as being barbaric and adolescent; the opportunity to retaliate or gain satisfaction.

Justice is fair and impartial behavior or treatment. In Shakespeare's Hamlet three characters go through a sudden death of a family member. The way that these characters deal with their problems display the rage and confusion that exists within the play. Hamlet, Laertes, and Claudius allow madness to poison their mind, disable the chance for justice and enable cold-blooded revenge to take over. With the unforeseen death of his father, Laertes is overwhelmed with misplaced anger and unanswered questions. Searching for answers he turns to Claudius.

At this point Laertes is frustrated and susceptible to a cure for his pain; to find this, he turns to Claudius. Claudius introduces his plan for revenge. "No place, indeed, should murder sanctuaries. Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes, will you do this, keep close within your chamber. These words are like a fishing reel, hooking the naive fish with an illusion of a fulfilling worm. Laertes has a unsaturated hunger for revenge, revenge for the murder of his father.

His word is like his blood, which seals to a contact that later leads to his own death. Madness takes over Laertes. He is blind to see that revenge is not the answer. Madness suffocates the soul of loyal Laertes, who is unable to breathe the sweet words of fair justice. Laertes challenges Hamlet to a fencing match, to compensate for his two losses. Sanity leaves the mind of his fair sister, Ophelia, she leaves this world to join her father. A distraught and infuriated Laertes demands a duel against the prince. Laertes and Hamlet exchange words before the match.

The match starts, with two hits against Laertes the opportunity for him to strike Hamlet becomes narrow. The sword dipped in poison slices through the skin of the unsuspecting Hamlet. His exposed is now contaminated, with Laertes' deadly revenge. Filled with anger and seeking his own revenge, Hamlet pierces through the skin of Laertes with the poisonous sword. They are

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both doomed to death. Laertes' last words cry for forgiveness.

Justice puts a murderer to death. Justice leaves the victim, the son of Polonius, to attend to his own issues of forgiveness. Revenge blackens the heart of the victim and changes his innocence to ignorance. With Laertes' search for self satisfying revenge he becomes naive to the simplistic answer, of justice.

Different from Laertes and Hamlet, Claudius is introduced as the villain. Early in the play Hamlet is visited by the Ghost of his father. The Ghost explains to Hamlet what happened. Hamlet vows vengeance on Claudius for the murder of his father.

The kingdom experiences a funeral and a wedding within a span of two months. The Queen, Gertrude is involved in both. The only person that sees anything wrong with that is Hamlet; as a result he confronts Gertrude. Here is your husband, like a mildewed ear/ blasting his wholesome brother. Hamlet opens the door for his mother to reach out and become aware of the hands of Claudius that cover her eyes making it impossible for her to see what surrounds her. She becomes aware that Claudius is the killer, yet she remains silent. Having his mother on his side comforts Hamlet. The sudden remarriage of his mother is more painful than his father's death. Hamlet is not interested in justice for Claudius, he wants revenge.

Hamlet needs to be certain of Claudius' guilt . Hamlet 's play within a play makes this possible. The characters King, Queen, and Uncle are based upon what Hamlet believes truly happened. The reaction of Claudius shows his frustration. "Give me some light. Away!

Hamlet sees that God will have Claudius' fate. Hamlet is not giving up on revenge, but is now motivated by moral grounds to see that killing Claudius is not harmful to his conscience. He tries to forget about killing Claudius , but will allow God to lead him to that opportunity.

In the final scene when the fencing match between Laertes and Hamlet takes place, it becomes obvious of the cold-heartedness of the king. Power overcomes his soul; the murder of his brother, his own flesh, his expressions and emotionless words leave that scene feeling frozen and without love. The death of the Queen from his own mistake seems to affect him very little. "It is poisoned cup, it is too late.

Yes, the murderer is now dead. But is Justice served? The murder of Claudius does not solve anything from the murder of the first king. Everyone that cares for the first king is now dead, no one is there to enjoy bringing the murderer to death. This is all due to revenge. Hamlet is concerned with revenge on Claudius; not even justice of his punishment for the murder of his father. Greed put poison onto the lips of Claudius. Revenge put silence on the lips of Hamlet.

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Revenge is the choice made by all three men. Vengeance spoiled their hearts; madness captured their minds, preventing them to see the alternate possibilities. The opportunity to retaliate is the choice of all three. Yet the gain of satisfaction is not achieved. The speeches by Horatio and Fortinbra's at the end of the play suggest a mixture of justice and massacre. There is no return of the Ghost to comment on the chain of events at the end of the play. It is a shame that self satisfying greed takes over the opportunities to make the moral choice. Temptation and selfishness are the mysteries of the human psyche. "Shakespeare intends us to leave the play wondering how much or how little has been achieved by Hamlet's revenge, despite its obvious attractions, can possibly enact justice."

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