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## The Theme of Revenge in Shakespeare's Book Hamlet.

Revenge is a dish best served cold. Rather than immediately exacting revenge upon a person who has done wrong, as sadistic as it may be, it is much more satisfying to meticulously formulate a plan that can inflict the harshest injury. In the world renowned literary work, Hamlet, Shakespeare is the judge, jury, and executioner as he goes about punishing the characters for their selfish and self-serving natures. As a means of revenge, Shakespeare forces the characters in the play to continuously recall their treasonous nature by overwhelming them with religious imagery and by employing Hamlet as his blunt and candid emissary.

Shakespeare initiates his revenge by sending Hamlet off to caustically rebuke his own mother and plague her with reminders of her late husband as penance for her disregard of the sanctity of holy matrimony. Despite the short amount of time that has passed since the death of Old Hamlet, Gertrude refuses to fulfill her role as a grieving widow and immediately takes on a new, more inferior husband, Claudius. She furthers the infidelity as she focuses on the wedding rather than taking time to mourn for the death of her husband and honoring his memory. However, she is unable to happily go about the wedding preparations for Hamlet always serve as a constant reminder of Old Hamlet's death. Gertrude demands Hamlet to "cast thy nighted color off" because the garment he adorns as he mourns his father continues to fill her with guilt every time lays eyes upon the garb. Nevertheless, Hamlet refuses to do so for he is determined to punish his mother and remind of her unfulfilled duties (I.ii.68). In order to highlight her treasonous act, Hamlet snubs her in the court play and directs the player Queen to recite, "Such love must needs be treason in my breast. / In second husband let me be accursed! / None wed the second but who killed the first (III.ii.164-166). By having the actress proclaim that she shall never remarry for that would be the most treacherous betrayal, it forces Gertrude to remember her own lack of loyalty and effectively guilt her. Shakespeare then sends Hamlet to confront his mother and show her the full the extent of her sinful nature by successfully isolating his mother and proclaiming that he will not let her leave until he has "set [her] up a glass/ Where [she] may see the inmost part of [herself] (III.IV.20-21). When Gertrude coyly avoids his questions and refuses to listen, Hamlet berates her with a harangue of verbal abuses. He begins by comparing his mother's two husbands and then accuses her of performing a deed that "blurs the grace and blush of modesty, / Calls virtue hypocrite" (III. iv.41-43). He forces Gertrude to witness the vile nature of her own acts and leaves her crying out for Hamlet to speak no more. Ultimately, Hamlet continuously recalls memories of the past in order to fully complete his revenge on Gertrude in Shakespeare's stead.

As a penalty for abusing his own daughter in a struggle for position and power, Polonius is openly insulted by Hamlet throughout the duration of the play and is forced to endure much

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humiliation. Throughout the play, Polonius can be seen as a hypocrite for he continuously tells his daughter, Ophelia, to end her relationship with Hamlet, but is eager to sacrifice her in order to discover what is the cause of Hamlet's madness and please the king. In secret, Polonius mocks his daughter for believing Hamlet's affections and asks her if she actually believes "'his tenders', as you may call them" (I.iii.104). However, he immediately changes his tune in front of the king, and proclaims that Hamlet is consumed by his love for Ophelia. He then sets up a test where he instructs Ophelia to share pleasantries with Hamlet despite insulting her for previously spending time with him. In light of seeing that Ophelia is being manipulated by her father, Hamlet proclaims to let Polonius "play the fool nowhere but in 's own house" and immediately rushes off to embarrass Polonius in front of the observing King. (III.i.133-134) Annoyed by Polonius's eagerness to benefit himself, Hamlet makes an emphatic biblical reference to Jephthah, a biblical character who sacrificed his daughter for a foolish reason and mocks Polonius for his ignorant acts. He calls Polonius by the name Jephthah and cajoles, "One fair daughter and no more, / The which he loved passing well (II.ii.378-379). While Hamlet's tone remains pleasant, he subliminally warns Polonius to stop using his daughter for personal gains and berates Polonius with insults to punish him for his immoral deeds. Overall, Polonius is continuously scorned and belittled due to his suppliant and hypocritical nature.

Lastly, Shakespeare exposes Claudius as the most sinful character in the play and severely chastises him by incessantly referring to the most ancient of betrayals: the story of Cain and Abel. Hamlet plots his final revenge and causes Claudius distress by forcing him to watch a maliciously arranged play, in which he can observe the wretchedness of his own acts. Prior to the viewing, Claudius was quite content for he had the crown, the queen, and all the power he so desperately craved. However, Hamlet harshly orchestrates a play in which the player king "poisons [the king] i' th' garden for 's estate..." (III.ii.244) by pouring poison into the king's ear and tells Claudius that he soon shall see shortly "how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife" (III.ii.245-247). Once Claudius physically sees the action that he himself performed upon his godly brother, he is no longer able to be content with his position as king for he must now begrudgingly acknowledge the fact that he did not rightfully earn the position of king. The effectiveness of the revenge ploy is apparent once Claudius rushes to beg for forgiveness in fear that his crime is so putrid that even heaven can "smell" his sin. However, his confession only brings him more torment and reveals the thoroughness of Shakespeare's intended retribution. Although Claudius has asked for the Lord's forgiveness, he knows he will not receive it for he is still "possessed / Of those effects for which [he] did the murder: / [His] crown, [his] own ambition, and [his] queen (III.iii.54-56). As a result, Claudius is left to contemplate whether he wants to cleanse his soul by relinquishing his unjust gains or if he wants to maintain his position as an unworthy king. Throughout the remainder of the play, Claudius is left to be haunted by his own thoughts and the revelation that the play has brought about.

In conclusion, Shakespeare performs an immaculate revenge by forces the major characters to

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suffer from the recollections of their own insolence. Despite their attempts to forget about their sins and live an ignorant life, Hamlet relentlessly invokes memories and refuses to let the characters live a content life. Instead, Shakespeare utilizes the sufferings of each character as a warning for the audience on the unforgiving nature of remembrance as a means of revenge.

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