
Hamlet: Character Analysis and Outstanding Features of the Author's Style

Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark, the title character, and the hero of the play. He is the son of Queen Gertrude and the late King Hamlet. The present king who happens to be his mother's new husband is his uncle Claudius. Hamlet is also a loner, bitter, and distrustful. He hates his uncle because he is aware of what his uncle did to his father. He dislikes his mother intensely because of her decision to marry his uncle right after his father passed away. Hamlet is actually an introspective young man who studied at the University of Wittenberg. He is indecisive and hesitant but sometimes can be impulsive in his decisions too. His indecisiveness becomes apparent when his father's ghost appeared before him to tell him that Claudius poisoned him. Hamlet was at first passive after being told of the truth of the death by the ghost of his father. Hamlet, instead of acting on what he knew for certain, spends his time laboring on how to prove that his uncle is guilty before taking actions". Therefore, this essay will discuss Hamlet and show evidence from the novel that Hamlet was not actually mad or insane but rather, was just feigning it in order to get to his father's murderer.

Hamlet's actions and thoughts are a logical response to the situation in which he finds himself. However, he assumes an antic-disposition to undercover the truth of his father's death. In the first act, Hamlet appears to be very straightforward in his actions and thoughts. When questioned by Gertrude about his melancholy appearance Hamlet says, "Seems, madam? Nay, it is known not seems" (Act 1. scene 2. 76). This is to say, "I am what I appear to be. Later he makes a clear statement about his thoughts of mind when he commits himself to revenge. Hamlet says, "I'll wipe away all trivial fond records, All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past, That youth, and observation copied there, And thy commandment all alone shall live Within the book and volume of my brain" (Act I, scene 4, 99-103). With this statement, the play makes a transition. Hamlet gives up the role of a student and mourning son and commits himself to nothing else but the revenge of his father's death. There is no confusion and certainly no sign of madness in Hamlet (Grady, 2002).

Hamlet is a character who although his actions and emotions may be one of an insane person, at the beginning of the book it is clear that Hamlet decides to fake madness in order for his plan to succeed in killing Claudius. Hamlet is sane because throughout the play he only acts crazy in front of certain people, to others he acts properly and displays proper prince like behavior who manage to cope with them without sounding crazy, and even after everything that has been going on in his mind. Hamlet only owns up to his madness because it buys him time to stay and perform actions if he didn't then he would not have been allowed to stay for such a long while. His "madness" is keeping people from taking his actions seriously. This seems to be part of his initial plan. This plan is first mentioned when he asks Horatio and Marcellus not to make any remarks in relation to his "antic disposition (Act 1. scene 5. 192)".

Hamlet's madness allows him to talk to Claudius, Gertrude, Ophelia, and Polonius in a manner that no prince would ever be allowed to speak in. Hamlet is often disrespectful and insulting in his remarks. Although his acting backfires during his speech to Gertrude, Hamlet is able to severely criticize her for the actions she has done because she thinks he is insane. During the play, he also makes many sexual hints and even obvious sexual remarks towards Ophelia such

as "That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs (Act 3. scene 2. 125)". His convincing insanity act gives him the chance to vent his anger towards Ophelia for her rejection.

Hamlet's most significant example of utilizing his madness ruse is after a troupe of actors enter Elsinore and present Hamlet with the solution he has been waiting for to prove his father had told him the truth about his murder. Saying, "I'll have these players Play something like the murder of my father Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks". Hamlet invites them in to perform a play in which he has previously seen, *The Murder of Gonzago*. He will stage a re-enactment of his father's murder and determine from Claudius' reaction whether or not he is guilty. When completing with Horatio the arrangements for the play, and just before the entrance of the court play, Hamlet says, "I must be idle". (Act 3. Scene 2). This evidently is a declaration of his intention to be foolish. Everyone comes together to watch the play as Hamlet himself provided the narration. When the murder scene is presented, Claudius' reaction was to jump up and leave the room which Hamlet interprets as proof of guilt. Hamlet's conduct and behavior clearly show someone who was in control of himself and using his pretended madness as a cover for his revenge on Claudius. He displays cunning, nerve, and purpose.

One definition of insanity includes "losing touch with reality, lacking the ability to determine right from wrong, or having no concept for the consequences of one's actions". Hamlet proves he is still sane at this point in the play by his ability to re-write a play to demonstrate the complexity of his father's murder. When he talks to Horatio about watching Claudius for signs of guilt during the play, he says "Give him a heedful note, for I mine eyes will rivet his face, and, after, we will both our judgments join in censure of his seeming (Act 3. scene 2. 87)". His words to Horatio are what a sane man would say. Horatio is one of the people he does not need to prove he is "insane," and, he does not try. When he is explaining to the players how to act, he is incredibly organized and normal sounding. For example, he asks "You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in could you not? (Act 2. scene 2. 565)" His question gets right to the point as well as his instructions. It seems that the player understands completely, but also is accepting what Hamlet has asked. It is much more believable than a sane man could play an insane one than an insane man could play a sane one. Proof that Hamlet must be sane is that even in his "madness" he is clever in his insults and speech, and has a full understanding of what's going on around him. He plays his madman character almost too well, and each phrase he utters appears to be an attempt towards showing his madness or confusing his enemy. (Lidz, 1975).

When alone, Hamlet takes off the mask of madness and starts pondering about his true concern, that is, the role he must fulfill. Hamlet is constantly aware of his mental processes. More than that, he is aware that he is constantly watching them. He proves that he is able to restore his brightness from the very moment he is left alone, unwatched: "Now I am alone. O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!". (Davis, 1921).

Furthermore, it can also be argued that Hamlet was truly mad as witnessed when he enters, speaking thoughtfully and agonizingly to himself about the question of whether to commit suicide to end the pain of experience: "To be or not to be: that is the question" (Act III, Scene I). He says that the miseries of life are such that no one would willingly bear them, except that they are afraid of "something after death". He criticizes women for making men behave like monsters and for contributing to the world's dishonesty by painting their faces to appear more beautiful than they are. Working himself into a rage, Hamlet denounces Ophelia, women, and humankind in general, saying that he wishes to end all marriages (Levin, 1959).

In another scene, he is able to tell Polonius his true feelings through his appearance. Polonius deciding to "take leave" of Hamlet, Hamlet replies, "You cannot take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal (Act 2. scene 2. 233)". Hamlet uses his madness as almost an excuse, and definitely part of his apology, towards Laertes for his murdering of Polonius towards the end. I don't think a real madman be able to realize he was mad and call his actions uncontrollable? If it wasn't for his "madness" he would have been talked to instead of feared, pitied, or ignored.

Hamlet's madness takes attention away from what he is thinking about his father's death and puts it on why he has gone insane. This allows only himself to know what he is truly thinking, does not require him to answer any questions as to why he might be acting strange and allows him to continue to plan his assault on Claudius. His plan to keep the appearance of a madman is a nifty one, and the fact that he does a good job in his portrayal only makes him more creative, not more insane. On the other hand, Hamlet acts perfectly sane when acting insane.

Not one of his remarks made to Claudius for example is a normal state that would be considered insane. When he talks to Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, Hamlet is clever to realize what their actual purpose of visiting was. "I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw. (Act 2. scene 2. 401)". Hamlet is able to play with his friends through his "madness" and is still capable to maintain his secret of what he is really doing. Hamlet is so creative in his responses made to express his madness that Polonius's comments on their skill. Though this is madness, yet there is a method in (Act 2. Scene 2. 223).

In conclusion, while pretending to be mad, Hamlet accomplished his goal. Ophelia did tell her father and her father told Hamlet's mother and uncle. They were convinced that he was mad at this point. At some point in the play, Ophelia becomes mad and unlike Hamlet, Ophelia succumbs to insanity by suspending her very own rationality. She does not enjoy Hamlet's ambiguity and insightful personality and this is precisely why her breakdown is never put into doubt. Hence, Ophelia's sincere madness serves effectively as a contrast to Hamlet's meticulously crafted insanity.