

Chapter 1 : Understanding Hamlet: Analysis of Hamlet Lesson Plan

Hamlet's bud Horatio tells Hamlet about the ghost and arranges a meeting. The ghost claims to be his father's spirit, proving it by telling Hamlet that Claudius is the man who murdered his father by pouring poison in his ear while he (Old Hamlet) was snoozing in his garden—and then ordering his son to take revenge.

Table of Contents Context The most influential writer in all of English literature, William Shakespeare was born in to a successful middle-class glove-maker in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Shakespeare attended grammar school, but his formal education proceeded no further. In he married an older woman, Anne Hathaway, and had three children with her. Around he left his family behind and traveled to London to work as an actor and playwright. Public and critical success quickly followed, and Shakespeare eventually became the most popular playwright in England and part-owner of the Globe Theater. His career bridged the reigns of Elizabeth I ruled “ and James I ruled “ , and he was a favorite of both monarchs. Wealthy and renowned, Shakespeare retired to Stratford and died in at the age of fifty-two. In the absence of credible evidence to the contrary, Shakespeare must be viewed as the author of the thirty-seven plays and sonnets that bear his name. The legacy of this body of work is immense. Written during the first part of the seventeenth century probably in or , Hamlet was probably first performed in July It was first published in printed form in and appeared in an enlarged edition in As was common practice during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Shakespeare borrowed for his plays ideas and stories from earlier literary works. The prince pretends to be feeble-minded to throw his uncle off guard, then manages to kill his uncle in revenge. Shakespeare makes it clear that the stakes riding on some of these questions are enormous—the actions of these characters bring disaster upon an entire kingdom. By modifying his source materials in this way, Shakespeare was able to take an unremarkable revenge story and make it resonate with the most fundamental themes and problems of the Renaissance. The Renaissance is a vast cultural phenomenon that began in fifteenth-century Italy with the recovery of classical Greek and Latin texts that had been lost to the Middle Ages. The scholars who enthusiastically rediscovered these classical texts were motivated by an educational and political ideal called in Latin *humanitas*—the idea that all of the capabilities and virtues peculiar to human beings should be studied and developed to their furthest extent. Renaissance humanism, as this movement is now called, generated a new interest in human experience, and also an enormous optimism about the potential scope of human understanding. How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god—the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! For the humanists, the purpose of cultivating reason was to lead to a better understanding of how to act, and their fondest hope was that the coordination of action and understanding would lead to great benefits for society as a whole. As the Renaissance spread to other countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, a more skeptical strain of humanism developed, stressing the limitations of human understanding. This is the world in which Shakespeare places his characters. Hamlet is faced with the difficult task of correcting an injustice that he can never have sufficient knowledge of—a dilemma that is by no means unique, or even uncommon. And while Hamlet is fond of pointing out questions that cannot be answered because they concern supernatural and metaphysical matters, the play as a whole chiefly demonstrates the difficulty of knowing the truth about other people—their guilt or innocence, their motivations, their feelings, their relative states of sanity or insanity. The world of other people is a world of appearances, and Hamlet is, fundamentally, a play about the difficulty of living in that world.

Chapter 2 : Analysis of Characters in Hamlet

Renaissance humanism, as this movement is now called, generated a new interest in human experience, and also an enormous optimism about the potential scope of human understanding. Hamlet's famous speech in Act II, "What a piece of work is a man!"

No matter how many ways critics examine him, no absolute truth emerges. Hamlet breathes with the multiple dimensions of a living human being, and everyone understands him in a personal way. The conundrum that is Hamlet stems from the fact that every time we look at him, he is different. In understanding literary characters, just as in understanding real people, our perceptions depend on what we bring to the investigation. Hamlet is so complete a character that, like an old friend or relative, our relationship to him changes each time we visit him, and he never ceases to surprise us. Therein lies the secret to the enduring love affair audiences have with him. They never tire of the intrigue. He has no friends left, but Horatio loves him unconditionally. He is angry, dejected, depressed, and brooding; he is manic, elated, enthusiastic, and energetic. He is dark and suicidal, a man who loathes himself and his fate. Yet, at the same time, he is an existential thinker who accepts that he must deal with life on its own terms, that he must choose to meet it head on. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. He recognizes the decay of the Danish society represented by his Uncle Claudius, but also understands that he can blame no social ills on just one person. He remains aware of the ironies that constitute human endeavor, and he savors them. Though he says, "Man delights not me," the contradictions that characterize us all intrigue him. How noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god! In his soliloquys he upbraids himself for his failure to act as well as for his propensity for words. Hamlet is infuriatingly adept at twisting and manipulating words. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, a play that was later adapted into a film, playwright and screenplaywright Tom Stoppard imagines the various wordplays in Hamlet as games. In one scene, his characters play a set of tennis where words serve as balls and rackets. Hamlet is certainly the Pete Sampras of wordplay. Continued on next page Next Hamlet Pop Quiz! Approximately how much time has passed between the death of King Hamlet and the remarriage of Gertrude to Claudius?

Chapter 3 : Understanding Hamlet : Richard Corum :

No Fear Shakespeare by SparkNotes features the complete edition of Hamlet side-by-side with an accessible, plain English translation.

This drama was written by William Shakespeare between and The plot is set in the country of Denmark, and the main protagonist is Prince Hamlet. It is still considered a pioneer in English literature. Several films and plays have been made as adaptations featuring many renowned actors. Synopsis Hamlet is the prince of Denmark. He is abroad, studying in Germany, when his father, the king, dies. Already drowning in grief, Hamlet becomes even more upset by the fact that his mother has married his uncle—the brother of her recently departed husband. Hamlet does not think she mourned his father for a reasonable amount of time before marrying again, and the hasty marriage also means that his uncle, now King Claudius, sits upon the throne rather than himself. Hamlet suspects foul play. One night, Hamlet sees the ghost of his father, who tells him that his death was not natural. Rather he was killed, and says his death was a "foul and most unnatural murder. Hamlet swears to fulfill his revenge and to kill King Claudius. But later, Hamlet faces a dilemma. Can he trust the ghost? Is the vision of a spirit enough reason to kill his uncle, the king? The play includes many philosophical situations and heart-wrenching scenes. This drama is worth reading for any person interested—even a little bit—in literary work, Shakespeare, drama, or just an amazing piece of writing. These speeches let us know what Hamlet is thinking but not saying, and there are seven soliloquies in all. If you are not familiar with what a soliloquy is, read "What is a Soliloquy? These articles each contain the original text of the soliloquy, as well as a summary and an explanation of that soliloquy. In these seven soliloquies, Hamlet shares his inner feelings, thoughts, and plans for the future. You will likely recognize lines, such as the famous "To be or not to be Links to Full Text and Summaries O that this too too solid flesh would melt, Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew! Act 1, Scene 2 O all you host of heaven! And shall I couple hell? Act 1, Scene 5 3. Now I am alone. O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I! Act 2, Scene 2 4. Let me be cruel, not unnatural; I will speak daggers to her, but use none And so am I revenged, that would be scanned Act 3, Scene 3 How all occasions do inform against me And spur my dull revenge!

Chapter 4 : Hamlet: Entire Play

Reading Hamlet, watching film adaptations of Hamlet, and reading scholarly works about Hamlet are fantastic ways to make this fabulous work your own. However, Hamlet is a play, and to truly appreciate it you should watch it performed on stage.

Most of the action takes place in and around Elsinore Castle. Near the beginning of the play, Prince Hamlet is visited by the ghost of his father, King Hamlet, who has recently died. The ghost instructs Hamlet to seek revenge for his murder. He tries to justify why he should wait before killing Claudius. He wants to take the time to act reasonably, but he also chastises himself for being indecisive and failing to act boldly. After talking to the ghost, Hamlet begins to act even more strangely. Soon, suspicion turns to fear, and Claudius concludes that Hamlet may be a threat to him. He recruits spies to try to uncover what Hamlet is up to, starting with Polonius, chief counselor of the king. Later he also convinces Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, childhood friends of Hamlet, to spy on Hamlet and report back to him. Hamlet feigns madness with his family and friends, including his beloved, Ophelia, daughter to Polonius and sister to Laertes. Hamlet decides to set a trap for Claudius to try to determine his guilt. A group of actors is going to put on a play for the royal court. Hamlet meets with the actors and instructs them to put on a play about regicide. The play is to be about a king who falls asleep in his garden, and then another man kills him by pouring poison in his ear. That is, exactly what the ghost told Hamlet that Claudius had done. Hamlet tells his loyal friend, Horatio, about his plan. At the play, Claudius becomes enraged and screams for more light. Hamlet is now convinced that the ghost was telling the truth and that Claudius is a murderer. He realizes that he must act and kill his uncle. Shortly after watching the play, Claudius is alone and, in a soliloquy, he expresses his guilt and grief over having killed his brother. However, he is unwilling to give up the things he gained by committing the murder, namely, the throne and the queen. He falls to his knees and begins to pray. As Claudius is praying, Hamlet walks by and sees him. This is a golden opportunity to kill Claudius. And yet, once again, Hamlet hesitates. Hamlet wants Claudius to go to hell, so he leaves without killing Claudius. However, Polonius is already there talking to the queen. When Polonius hears Hamlet approaching, he quickly hides behind a tapestry so that he can eavesdrop on the conversation between Hamlet and the queen. She cries out for help and foolish Polonius echoes her cry from behind the tapestry. He lunges at the hidden figure and stabs it forcefully with his sword, thus killing Polonius. The dead Polonius rolls out from under the tapestry. Instead, he does so blindly, recklessly, and violently. Ophelia is the only woman in the play in addition to Queen Gertrude. Hamlet was at one time sincerely in love with Ophelia. However, the circumstances that Hamlet finds himself in lead him to start feeling unsympathetic toward her. Hamlet transfers the anger that he feels toward his mother—whom he concludes is a woman of loose morals—to all women, including the pure and virtuous Ophelia. He pushes Ophelia away and tells her to join a nunnery. She goes mad, throws herself into a river, and drowns. In the meantime, Denmark is under threat of attack from Norway. King Hamlet killed King Fortinbras in hand-to-hand combat, thus winning lands from Norway. There are many parallels between Fortinbras and Hamlet: They both lose their fathers. In both cases, their uncles took over the throne. However, their characters are very different. While this threat looms from Norway, the Danish royal house is in disarray. Laertes has returned to Denmark from France to avenge the death of his father, Polonius. Claudius tells him that it was Hamlet who killed Polonius, and the two men devise a plot to kill Hamlet. Like Fortinbras, Laertes is a man of action. Claudius and Laertes decide that Laertes will challenge Hamlet to a friendly duel. If Laertes draws blood, Hamlet will die. As a backup plan, Claudius puts poison in a goblet filled with wine. If Laertes fails to poison Hamlet with his blade, then Claudius will offer Hamlet a drink from the poisoned goblet. Queen Gertrude ends up drinking from the poisoned goblet, and dies. Laertes is cut by his own poisoned sword and dies. Hamlet stabs Claudius with the poisoned sword and forces him to drink the rest of the poisoned wine, thereby killing him. Hamlet dies immediately after achieving his revenge. When he sees that the entire Danish royal family is dead, he takes power over the Kingdom of Denmark. The Original Hamlet As was common in his day, Shakespeare based many of his plays on the work of other playwrights and recycled older stories and

historical material. This is true of his play Hamlet. The story of Hamlet dates back to at least the 9th century. Saxo the Grammaticus included the tale in a 12th century text. This is a film adaptation of Hamlet, adapted for the screen and directed by Kenneth Branagh, who also stars in the titular role as Prince Hamlet. This is a film adaptation of Hamlet, adapted and directed by and starring Sir Laurence Olivier. Although the film has received many prestigious accolades, it cut out nearly two hours worth of content. The film also features Glenn Close as Queen Gertrude. This is a adaptation of Hamlet, which is set in contemporary New York City. Ethan Hawke plays Hamlet as a film student. It stars Derek Jacobi as Hamlet. This is not really a film, but a recording of an actual Broadway performance. Look at the following: Scarâ€™like Claudiusâ€™kills his brother and takes over as ruler of the Pride Lands. Simbaâ€™like Hamletâ€™gets visited by the ghost of his father, Mufasa. Mufasa, of course, is like King Hamlet. Read a Plot Synopsis. Before you sit down to read Hamlet, you should read a synopsis of the play. I provide one above, but you may want to do your own research and find a synopsis that you like. There are two books that I used for this purpose: Shakespeare A to Z: These include SparkNotes , Shmoop , and eNotes. In addition to reading a synopsis of the entire play before getting started, read a synopsis of each scene before reading that scene. Choose a Good Annotated Edition. In addition, he makes references to historical events that only people of his time would have understood. Here are three popular annotated editions of Hamlet you can choose from: Hamlet Folger Library Shakespeare â€™ this is the one I have, and would recommend. Read Slowly and Carefully. Read each page once without referring to the annotations. You may even want to read it out loud. Then, read the page again, but this time refer to the annotations. The BBC uses fantastic actors, and their adaptations closely follow the original material. In addition, Patrick Stewart plays Claudius. This will help you to make sure that you understood what you just read and saw, and it will help you to retain it. Here are some things you may want to jot down: A summary of the scene. Your impressions of the scene. Anything you noticed about the characters that appeared in the scene. Themesâ€™mortality, action, madness, lies and deceitâ€™and subplots that were present in the scene. Note how the scene moves the main plot of revenge along. In addition, write down any quotes that caught your fancy. Here are some of the most famous quotes from Hamlet:

Chapter 5 : Hamlet: Hamlet | Character Analysis | CliffsNotes

Through judicious selection of primary historical documents, the work provides contexts for understanding Hamlet's melancholy, the ghost of Hamlet's father, the theme of revenge, and Hamlet's feigned madness.

Denmark has a long-standing feud with neighbouring Norway, in which King Hamlet slew King Fortinbras of Norway in a battle some years ago. After the ghost appears again, the three vow to tell Prince Hamlet what they have witnessed. As the court gathers the next day, while King Claudius and Queen Gertrude discuss affairs of state with their elderly adviser Polonius, Hamlet looks on glumly. Claudius also scolds Hamlet for continuing to grieve over his father, and forbids him to return to his schooling in Wittenberg. Learning of the ghost from Horatio, Hamlet resolves to see it himself. Horatio, Hamlet, and the ghost Artist: That night on the rampart, the ghost appears to Hamlet, telling the prince that he was murdered by Claudius and demanding that Hamlet avenge him. Hamlet agrees and the ghost vanishes. The prince confides to Horatio and the sentries that from now on he plans to "put an antic disposition on", or act as though he has gone mad, and forces them to swear to keep his plans for revenge secret. Act II[edit] Soon thereafter, Ophelia rushes to her father, telling him that Hamlet arrived at her door the prior night half-undressed and behaving erratically. As he enters to do so, the king and queen finish welcoming Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two student acquaintances of Hamlet, to Elsinore. Additional news requires that Polonius wait to be heard: The forces that Fortinbras had conscripted to march against Denmark will instead be sent against Poland, though they will pass through Danish territory to get there. Hamlet feigns madness but subtly insults Polonius all the while. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive, Hamlet greets his "friends" warmly, but quickly discerns that they are spies. Hamlet becomes bitter, admitting that he is upset at his situation but refusing to give the true reason why, instead commenting on "what a piece of work" humanity is. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern tell Hamlet that they have brought along a troupe of actors that they met while traveling to Elsinore. Hamlet, after welcoming the actors and dismissing his friends-turned-spies, asks them to deliver a soliloquy about the death of King Priam and Queen Hecuba at the climax of the Trojan War. His reaction convinces Claudius that Hamlet is not mad for love. Shortly thereafter, the court assembles to watch the play Hamlet has commissioned. After seeing the Player King murdered by his rival pouring poison in his ear, Claudius abruptly rises and runs from the room: Hamlet mistakenly stabs Polonius Artist: Coke Smyth, 19th century. Gertrude summons Hamlet to her room to demand an explanation. Meanwhile, Claudius talks to himself about the impossibility of repenting, since he still has possession of his ill-gotten goods: He sinks to his knees. Polonius, spying on the conversation from behind a tapestry, calls for help as Gertrude, believing Hamlet wants to kill her, calls out for help herself. Hamlet, believing it is Claudius, stabs wildly, killing Polonius, but pulls aside the curtain and sees his mistake. Claudius switches tactics, proposing a fencing match between Laertes and Hamlet to settle their differences. Laertes will be given a poison-tipped foil, and Claudius will offer Hamlet poisoned wine as a congratulation if that fails. Gertrude interrupts to report that Ophelia has drowned, though it is unclear whether it was suicide or an accident exacerbated by her madness. Act V[edit] Horatio has received a letter from Hamlet, explaining that the prince escaped by negotiating with pirates who attempted to attack his England-bound ship, and the friends reunite offstage. Hamlet picks up the skull, saying "alas, poor Yorick" as he contemplates mortality. Hamlet and Horatio initially hide, but when Hamlet realizes that Ophelia is the one being buried, he reveals himself, proclaiming his love for her. A foppish courtier, Osric, interrupts the conversation to deliver the fencing challenge to Hamlet. Hamlet does well at first, leading the match by two hits to none, and Gertrude raises a toast to him using the poisoned glass of wine Claudius had set aside for Hamlet. Claudius tries to stop her, but is too late: Laertes slashes Hamlet with his poisoned blade. In the ensuing scuffle, they switch weapons and Hamlet wounds Laertes with his own poisoned sword. Gertrude collapses and, claiming she has been poisoned, dies. Hamlet rushes at Claudius and kills him. As the poison takes effect, Hamlet, hearing that Fortinbras is marching through the area, names the Norwegian prince as his successor. Horatio promises to recount the full story of what happened, and Fortinbras, seeing the entire Danish royal family dead, takes the crown for himself, and orders a military funeral to honour Hamlet.

Sources of Hamlet A facsimile of *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus, which contains the legend of Amleth Hamlet-like legends are so widely found for example in Italy, Spain, Scandinavia, Byzantium, and Arabia that the core "hero-as-fool" theme is possibly Indo-European in origin. The first is the anonymous Scandinavian Saga of Hrolf Kraki. Possibly written by Thomas Kyd or even William Shakespeare, the Ur-Hamlet would have existed by, and would have incorporated a ghost. Consequently, there is no direct evidence that Kyd wrote it, nor any evidence that the play was not an early version of Hamlet by Shakespeare himself. This latter idea—placing Hamlet far earlier than the generally accepted date, with a much longer period of development—has attracted some support. Whether Shakespeare took these from Belleforest directly or from the hypothetical Ur-Hamlet remains unclear. Conventional wisdom holds that Hamlet is too obviously connected to legend, and the name Hamnet was quite popular at the time. He notes that the name of Hamnet Sadler, the Stratford neighbour after whom Hamnet was named, was often written as Hamlet Sadler and that, in the loose orthography of the time, the names were virtually interchangeable. Chamberleyne his servantes ". Hamlet is not among them, suggesting that it had not yet been written. As Hamlet was very popular, Bernard Lott, the series editor of *New Swan*, believes it "unlikely that he [Meres] would have overlooked Other scholars consider this inconclusive. In the booksellers Nicholas Ling and John Trundell published, and Valentine Simmes printed, the so-called "bad" first quarto. Q1 contains just over half of the text of the later second quarto. In Nicholas Ling published, and James Roberts printed, the second quarto. Each text contains material that the other lacks, with many minor differences in wording: Some contemporary scholarship, however, discounts this approach, instead considering "an authentic Hamlet an unrealisable ideal. Colin Burrow has argued that "most of us should read a text that is made up by conflating all three versions Scholars immediately identified apparent deficiencies in Q1, which was instrumental in the development of the concept of a Shakespearean "bad quarto ". The major deficiency of Q1 is in the language: It is suggested by Irace that Q1 is an abridged version intended especially for travelling productions, thus the question of length may be considered as separate from issues of poor textual quality. Irace, in her introduction to Q1, wrote that "I have avoided as many other alterations as possible, because the differences Before then, he was either mad, or not; either a hero, or not; with no in-betweens. Dramatic structure[edit] Hamlet departed from contemporary dramatic convention in several ways. The play is full of seeming discontinuities and irregularities of action, except in the "bad" quarto. At one point, as in the Gravedigger scene, [a] Hamlet seems resolved to kill Claudius: The Riverside edition constitutes 4, lines totaling 29, words, typically requiring over four hours to stage. This work specifically advises royal retainers to amuse their masters with inventive language. Osric and Polonius, especially, seem to respect this injunction. He uses highly developed metaphors, stichomythia, and in nine memorable words deploys both anaphora and asyndeton: Hamlet interrupts himself, vocalising either disgust or agreement with himself, and embellishing his own words. He has difficulty expressing himself directly and instead blunts the thrust of his thought with wordplay. It is not until late in the play, after his experience with the pirates, that Hamlet is able to articulate his feelings freely. Written at a time of religious upheaval, and in the wake of the English Reformation, the play is alternately Catholic or piously medieval and Protestant or consciously modern. The ghost describes himself as being in purgatory, and as dying without last rites. Some scholars have observed that revenge tragedies come from Catholic countries like Italy and Spain, where the revenge tragedies present contradictions of motives, since according to Catholic doctrine the duty to God and family precedes civil justice. Dialogue refers explicitly to Wittenberg, where Hamlet, Horatio, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern attend university, implying where Martin Luther in first proposed his 95 theses and thereby initiated the Protestant Reformation. Thomas de Leu, fl. Hamlet is often perceived as a philosophical character, expounding ideas that are now described as relativist, existentialist, and sceptical. For example, he expresses a subjectivistic idea when he says to Rosencrantz: Hamlet reflects the contemporary scepticism promoted by the French Renaissance humanist Michel de Montaigne. In the first half of the 20th century, when psychoanalysis was at the height of its influence, its concepts were applied to Hamlet, notably by Sigmund Freud, Ernest Jones, and Jacques Lacan, and these studies influenced theatrical productions. Ophelia is overwhelmed by having her unfulfilled love for him so abruptly terminated and drifts into the oblivion of insanity. Lacan postulated that the human psyche is

determined by structures of language and that the linguistic structures of Hamlet shed light on human desire. Eliot, who preferred Coriolanus to Hamlet, or so he said. Who can believe Eliot, when he exposes his own Hamlet Complex by declaring the play to be an aesthetic failure? Rothman suggests that "it was the other way around: Hamlet helped Freud understand, and perhaps even invent, psychoanalysis". He concludes, "The Oedipus complex is a misnomer. If Hamlet is the biological son of Claudius, that explains many things. He is angry with his mother because of her long standing affair with a man Hamlet hates, and Hamlet must face the fact that he has been sired by the man he loathes. That point overturns T. Gontar suggests that if the reader assumes that Hamlet is not who he seems to be, the objective correlative becomes apparent. Hamlet is suicidal in the first soliloquy not because his mother quickly remarries but because of her adulterous affair with the despised Claudius which makes Hamlet his son.

Chapter 6 : Understanding Hamlet (edition) | Open Library

Understanding Hamlet: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents Shakespeare's Hamlet, regarded by many as the world's most famous play by the world's most famous writer, is one of the most complex, demanding, discussed, and influential literary texts in English.

Only then may he begin to accept the knowledge as truth and act accordingly. Optionlock Story Limit Though the Ghost is impatient for revenge, there is plenty of time to murder Claudius. There are, however, only so many ways to bring about the downfall of Claudius without bringing down the rest of the royal family and friends. Failure Story Outcome In the effort to bring down Claudius and restore balance in the kingdom, many lives are lost—including all those of the royal family. Hamlet is dead, the great promise of his life forever lost. Something is indeed rotten in the state of Denmark. The monarch on whom the health and safety of the kingdom depend is a murderer. Yet few persons know his secret: Hamlet, Horatio only belatedly, Claudius himself, and ourselves as audience. For, according to their own lights, Polonius and the rest behave as courtiers normally behave, obeying and flattering a king whom they acknowledge as their legitimate ruler. Hamlet, for his part, is so obsessed with the secret murder that he overreacts to those around him, rejecting overtures of friendship and becoming embittered, callous, brutal, and even violent. His antisocial behavior gives the others good reason to fear him as a menace to the state. Nevertheless, we share with Hamlet a knowledge of the truth and know that he is right, whereas the others are at best unhappily deceived by their own blind complicity in evil. Actuality Overall Story Response Hamlet is constantly trying to expose the true nature of people and events, for example, are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern really his friends or agents of the King? Subconscious Overall Story Benchmark The means by which progress is measured in the objective story are basic human drives and desires: He soon meets with a specter claiming to be the ghost of his father. The Ghost tells him he was murdered by his brother, King Claudius, and commands Hamlet to seek revenge. Hamlet agrees to do so, but conflicted by his own nature, he does not act immediately. King Claudius and his councillor, Polonius, have their suspicions about the young man and keep close watch. Falsehood and playacting occur on all sides creating mayhem and madness. Revenge is eventually exacted, but at a cost far too dear; all the primary objective characters, with the exception of Horatio, suffer a tragic death. That law is based upon the sacramental view of a mystical bond formed in marriage which creates a relationship between man and wife as close as that which exists between blood relations. Traditionally, incest was considered to be an offense against the whole of society. Lowers 21 Main Character Throughline Psychology Main Character Throughline Hamlet is a seriously introspective man, tending to bouts of melancholy and mind games. Certain critics [notably A. In an age when the proper study of mankind was man, it seems improbable that a writer like Shakespeare, with his manifest intellectual curiosity and acquisitive mind, was unfamiliar with contemporary ideas regarding the causes, symptoms, and results of melancholy. He wishes to be remembered as the worthy son of the superior King Hamlet, as minister called upon to execute public justice, not as scourge. Is he sane, or does he just think he is? And William Hazlitt continues: Change Main Character Symptom Hamlet focuses on the changes that have occurred around him and sees them as the source of his troubles: Inertia Main Character Response Hamlet would like things to go back to the way they were before his father died—sans Claudius, of course. He has complete access to the castle, to finances, to his mother the queen, and most importantly to the king and his private chambers. Interpretation Main Character Critical Flaw Combined with his penchant for thought, Hamlet is constantly finding multitudes of meaning in things—many of which are completely misconstrued and undermine his efforts. Publicly, he appears to grow crazier and crazier. Privately, however, he appears to become more and more heartsick and accepting of the death he feared so much in the beginning. Hamlet does not move from a state of well-being or happiness to adversity and suffering. Influence Character Throughline The Ghost — The spirit of King Hamlet Physics Influence Character Throughline The Ghost is the spirit of King Hamlet who is doomed to walk the earth during the nights and endure purgatorial fires during the daytime in expiation of sins committed during life. Understanding Influence Character Concern The Ghost wants everybody, particularly Hamlet, to understand

what happened to him—the manner of his death, and so forth. The prevailing theories were that a ghost may be 1 a hallucination, 2 a spirit returned to perform some deed left undone in life, 3 a specter seen as a portent, 4 a spirit returned from the grave from purgatory by divine permission, or 5 a devil disguised as a dead person. Lower 16 Conditioning Influence Character Counterpoint The prevailing theories were that a ghost may be 1 a hallucination, 2 a spirit returned to perform some deed left undone in life, 3 a specter seen as a portent, 4 a spirit returned from the grave from purgatory by divine permission, or 5 a devil disguised as a dead person. In the course of the play each of these theories is put to the test. Immediately the first is rejected, but much later in the play it will arise again. The educated, skeptical Horatio proves to his own satisfaction that this particular ghost is a real one, not an illusion. Horatio properly is called upon to question it [the Ghost] because he is a scholar, trained in Latin and knowledgeable in arcane things. Conditioning Because of conditioning in life, the Ghost of the late King appears in the same armor he was known to wear and on familiar territory, the royal castle at Elsinore. However, his instincts to flee the coming of the morning—even when he desires to stick around—illustrates the conflict of instinct vs. Aware Influence Character Solution As he becomes less focused on himself and more aware of what is transpiring in the castle, the Ghost begins to lose its vehemence, particularly when it comes to his antagonism toward the queen. For example, the Ghost asks Hamlet to speak with Gertrude: Actuality Claudius truly murdered King Hamlet, and the impact of its revelation on Hamlet is tremendous. Senses Influence Character Unique Ability Sometimes other people cannot see the Ghost which makes it difficult for Hamlet to deal with the seeming reality of the Ghost and the demands it has made upon him. Neill Influence Character Backstory One of the prime concerns of the Ghost is that, as a mortal, it was denied the opportunity to be shriven receive absolution for sins prior to death and thus must endure spiritual purgation before it can be admitted to heaven. Obviously he was not perfect; no mortal is, according to church doctrine because mankind remains tainted as the result of original sin. The Ghost is only too aware of mortal imperfections; it has a conscience practically Calvinistic in its strictness. Fate Relationship Story Issue Despite his friends attempts to prevent Hamlet from going off with the Ghost, he believes he must, as it is his fate: Still am I called. Ghost and Hamlet exit. He eventually allows destiny to take its course, believing: Relationship Story Thematic Conflict Fate vs. Thought Relationship Story Problem The Ghost wants revenge, but Hamlet obsessively mulls over the type, meaning, and need for revenge without just killing Claudius. More and worse chaos will be introduced into the kingdom until Claudius is undone. Order Relationship Story Response By setting the royal family and court back in order—without Claudius—Hamlet hopes and the Ghost expects all to be well again. Is the Ghost truly his late father? It is an evil specter from hell? The shakier that future seems, the greater the strain is between Hamlet and the Ghost of his father. The Ghost calls upon him to prove his love for his father: The Prince receives this startling news as if it were confirmation of his suspicions. Hamlet is called upon to kill his uncle. But the Ghost adds a word of caution: The Prince solemnly vows to wipe all else from his memory except that which the Ghost has told him. Whether or not Gertrude was unfaithful prior to the death of King Hamlet remains a disputed point. But one thing is clear: Past Overall Story Consequence If the memory of King Hamlet is not allowed to rest, a repetition of the past murder will and does occur. In his worldliness and cynicism, he is absolutely sure that he knows how young men behave when away from parental control—drinking, fencing, quarreling, and wenching. Not only is Polonius ready to believe the worst about his son, but also he seems to be incapable of honesty in his methods. His outlook and conduct suggest the kind of world in which Hamlet is now living. Indirection—espionage—becomes an elaborate game very soon in the play; this episode prepares the way for it. Lower 33 ; Hamlet is satisfied that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern deserve what they get for betraying his friendship when he formulates a plan to send them, instead of himself, to their deaths. Subconscious Overall Story Requirements Hamlet must get Claudius to expose his true nature, his lust for power and lust for Gertrude, before anyone will believe his accusations. In order for Hamlet to make a powerful impact in exposing Claudius as a murderer, Claudius must still enjoy a future as ruler of Denmark. Becoming Overall Story Forewarnings Hamlet starts becoming the crazy person he is pretending to be. This alerts everyone, including King Claudius, who plots against Hamlet.

Chapter 7 : JSTOR Understanding Shakespeare - Hamlet

Understanding Hamlet provides a detailed analysis of the play Hamlet by William Shakespeare. This analysis begins with the principle that all aspects of a play, including character and theme, are secondary to, and must be understood within, the sequence of events in the play itself.

Many questions emerge as the text progresses. What happens when you die? Do kings truly have a free pass to heaven? A turning point for Hamlet occurs in the graveyard scene in Act V. Before, Hamlet has been appalled and revolted by the moral corruption of the living. The sheer number of bodies at the end of Hamlet can be misleading. Even though eight of the nine primary characters die, the question of mortality is not fully answered. The questions about death, suicide, and what comes after are left unanswered. What Hamlet presents in an exploration and discussion without a true resolution. To notice a method behind the crazy talk was impressive of Polonius. His acting mad seems to cause Hamlet to lose his grip on reality. The circumstances he has to manage emotionally are difficult, to say the least. Succumbing to physical violence when under extreme stress shows that Hamlet has deeper-set issues than merely acting mad. Women The presence of only two named female characters says something about the role of women within Hamlet. The death of both women also indicates a social commentary. Hamlet is at his most agitated state when talking to either female character. The idea freaks Hamlet out. From the way the characters talk, we know Hamlet has been wooing Ophelia for some time. In reality, Ophelia obeyed her father and her monarch. In both cases, Hamlet feels as if each woman has let him down, respectively. In either case, the role and treatment of women in Hamlet is essential to discuss with an open mind. Political Livelihood The state of the nation in Denmark is deteriorating. The death of a king throws any nation into political turmoil. This moment could be interpreted as foreshadowing of the impending deaths of most of the principle characters. But it also refers to the political unrest Denmark is feeling as a nation. The political livelihood of Denmark can be directly linked back to the mental state of Hamlet at many points throughout the play. Approximately how much time has passed between the death of King Hamlet and the remarriage of Gertrude to Claudius?

Chapter 8 : Hamlet: Major Themes | Critical Essays | CliffsNotes

Themes are central to understanding Hamlet as a play and identifying Shakespeare's social and political commentary. Mortality The weight of one's mortality and the complexities of life and death are introduced from the beginning of Hamlet.

Check new design of our homepage! Although, it has various complex themes, the characters are a true replica of human nature. This Penlighten article will help you get a detailed understanding of the various characters. It is the longest play written by him, and also one of the most powerful. The play is about the conflict of a person, who had to choose between moral values and personal revenge. Synoptic Overview The plan involves complex themes like revenge, treachery, moral corruption, and incest. Prince Hamlet is enraged by the fact that his mother, Queen Gertrude, married his uncle, Claudius, soon after the death of his father, King Hamlet. When he sees the ghost of his deceased father, he learns that his father was murdered by his uncle. This arouses in him, a feeling of revenge towards his uncle. He also suspects that his mother was involved in the murder plan, and this angers him even further. He starts acting like a madman so that no one suspects his actual motive, and also turns away from his lady love Ophelia. Learning about the death of her father Polonius, Ophelia becomes mad with grief and commits suicide. To save himself, Claudius makes plans to kill Hamlet. Instead of Hamlet, Gertrude drinks the poison and dies. Hamlet kills Laertes but is wounded by his poisonous sword. They are very human, and react to situations in the way people would behave in certain situations, even in real life. The protagonists in his tragic plays have superior characteristics that make them great and powerful, but they all have one flaw, which leads them to their tragedy. It is the same in the case of prince Hamlet. It is a complex play, and understanding its characters is not a simple task. Each one has different layers, and are rounded, as seen in most plays of Shakespeare. He never portrayed characters as black and white because he believed that human beings have a mixture of good virtues as well as bad. He is an intelligent and knowledgeable person, a University student, thoughtful and philosophical by nature. He thinks deeply about important matters, and decisions in life. However, this contemplative nature is also his major flaw. His lack of timely action is the cause of his tragedy. Even after he sees the ghost of his father, he does not totally believe that Claudius killed his father. Only when he gets the proof that his uncle is guilty, he is ready to kill him. Even after that, he delays his action in spite of getting plenty of chances to do it. However, he has a contradictory personality too. This is seen when he suddenly kills Polonius, thinking that it was Claudius, who was standing behind the tapestry. This comes as a shock to the audience, because Hamlet does not even think about checking who the person is before killing. His powerful ambition leads him to kill his own brother, and marry his widow to usurp the throne from Hamlet, who is the heir apparent. He is a calculative man who can fall to any level to hold his power to himself. He thinks only of himself, and has the ability to manipulate people the way he wants to. However, this evil character shows its human nature too. He feels guilty, and is shown to be praying for forgiveness in various acts of the play. Although he may have married Gertrude for power, he seems to truly love her. However, his evil virtues foreground his good ones, leading to his tragic end. Her character is completely opposite to that of Hamlet. She is a person who does not think much about consequences of her actions. It can be said that her hasty marriage to Claudius led to the destruction of the entire family. In many parts of the play, Hamlet condemns Gertrude for having weak moral standards, as he could not accept the fact of her remarriage. Her actions reveal that by marrying Claudius, she made a choice that would be beneficial to her without affecting her power and position. Although Gertrude appears to be a shallow woman, she is shown as a loving mother who cared for her son till her last breath. Hamlet loves this beautiful and innocent daughter of Polonius and apparently she loves him too. But, her father and brother dissuade her from having any relationship with Hamlet, as they think that he does not love her truly. Being an obedient daughter, she never professes her love for him. Ophelia gets disturbed when she sees Hamlet acting as a madman, and under the orders of the king and her father, tries to know about his real motive. Hamlet accuses her of being a spy, and condemns her for betraying him. This behavior of Hamlet shocks her and when he kills her father, her gentle heart is shattered. She goes mad with grief and finally kills

herself. The people she loved i. Hamlet emphasizes the fact that Shakespeare was truly a genius. Although the play was written in the 16th or 17th century, by observing the people of those times, it surely rings true even in this century.

Chapter 9 : Hamlet - Wikipedia

Hamlet is a challenging text and understanding the techniques Shakespeare used in his plays can often be daunting for students. By focusing on specific scenes, students are able to better engage with the text and look closely at some of the devices used such as imagery, soliloquy, asides, allusions and so on.