

The Theme Of Loss In Shakespeare's Play Hamlet

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Hamlet is the most famous play of Shakespeare, which has celebrated immense popularity. "The Tragedy of Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark" is a tragedy drama which unveils the dark aspects of human nature. The tone used in Hamlet is not didactic and lets the reader evaluate himself or herself for the fundamental concerns of every human being: love, morality, and betrayal. For ages, the character Hamlet has been inspiring people. This is mainly due to his eloquence and vivid thoughts. But a vigilant reader can look at the tremendous experience of the pain residing behind his ideas. As Hamlet himself claimed in the play, it is his heart that he unpacks with words. The tremendous sorrow and the grief rooted in his heart due to experiencing betrayal and hatred bestowed him with intellectual energy, which the readers have admired for years. The theme of vengeance may have given the play a theatrical power, but the subject of loss and grief provided the play with compelling emotional content. The theme is the overarching and prevailing philosophy around which the concepts and characters of the drama revolve. The theme of "loss" is the most pervasive. Loss can assume several different forms, yet the guaranteed sheer experience of grief characterizes each type. This review focuses on three various ways the loss attained in the tragic life of Prince Hamlet. This paper will discuss how the theme of loss runs throughout Shakespeare's play Hamlet. (Shakespeare, 1992)

Loss of life: death: [Death is one of the most prevailing themes](#) in the entire drama; the loss of a loved one can ultimately result in continuous distress and familial complications. In the play, Hamlet has been through both crises. The murder of Hamlet's father by his uncle and then the marriage of her mother to the same murderer caused Hamlet to experience grave hysteria. As Hamlet once shows his deep-rooted grief in the following dialogue.

"O, that this too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God, God,
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!"
(Ham. Scene 1. Act 2. Lines 133-138)

Melancholy and vengefulness continuously fed his frenzy. Not only did Hamlet alone seem to experience this distress, but one of the other main characters, Ophelia, also experienced both the grief of the deceased loved one and familial complications. At the death of her father, she was immensely grieved.

"I hope all will be well. We must be patient, but I cannot choose but weep to think they would lay him I' th' cold ground [...]"

(Ham. Scene 5. Act 4. lines 60-65)

As the story was building, Ophelia was stuck between the will of his father, Polonius and Hamlet. She was obedient to her father, and like every obedient daughter, it was difficult for her to get rebellious against his will, but in the same instance, she loved Hamlet. So there, she experienced the woundless grief of familial crisis. Not only did Shakespeare address death alone, but the spiritual aspect of mortality and the afterlife of death also remained an integral part of Hamlet's thoughts. However, the questions of death, suicide, life, and the afterlife were still not answered, and the suspense takes the reader on a self-exploration journey.

Loss of sanity: madness. Since the murder of their father, the personality of Hamlet assumed many different forms: an eloquent philosopher, a shrewd person, and an erratic, mentally disturbed person. Hamlet opted for madness to show the grief betrayal has given to him. The loss of Hamlet's sanity had different perspectives for different characters—Lord Claudius takes the madness of Hamlet as prevention and methodical. As he spoke out his concerns as:

"And can you by no drift of conference

Get from him why he puts on this confusion,

Grating so harshly all his days of quiet

With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?"

(Ham. Scene 3. Act 1. Lines 1-5)

Hamlet himself said that there is a method in his madness, as it can be depicted when he says to Rosencrantz:

"I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is Southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw"

(Ham. Scene 2. Act 2. Lines 402-403)

Was Claudius vigilant enough to look beyond the action, or was it his guilt which made him think so. While on the other hand, Ophelia is able to see the deep-rooted anger and pain hiding under the hysterical behaviour of Hamlet. Shakespeare has aptly showcased how the loss of sanity can derive a person from submitting to physical violence.

The loss of certainty: uncertainty. Many readers think that along with a vengeance, the indecisiveness builds the mystery factor throughout the story. But there is much more to dig in. Hamlet shows how our lives are a complex of uncertainties and how the loss of certainty can influence the actions of a person. The bunch of doubts hovered in the mind of hamlet and were the potential cause of his

hysteria. Through the character of the prince, Shakespeare unriddled many underlying mysteries of human life. Was the ghost real? Was it telling aptly about his death or spirit itself was deluded? (Shakespeare, 1992)

“To be, or not to be, that is the question:

Whether’ tis nobler in mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing, end them”

(Ham. Scene 3. Act 1. Lines 55-60)

How can the unwitnessed crimes be claimed? Can the state of one’s soul be determined by the actions of the individual? Can the state of mind or the depth of grief be measured by the actions? What happens when a person dies? Does death erase the difference between the rich and the poor? These were a few uncertainties that fogged his mind. When in the graveyard, Hamlet comes to see the skull of Yorick. Just the mere sight of it compelled him to ponder, does death make all equal?

“That skull had a tongue in it and could sing
Once. How the knave jowls it to the ground as if
It were Cain’s jawbone that did the first murder!”

(Ham. Scene 5. Act 1. Lines 77-79)

The Great Loss, irrespective of its kind, has the potential to make a person bleed. The emotional distress and the loss of loved ones can have a disastrous effect on the emotional well-being of an individual. The loss of loyalty can cast deep shadows, like the betrayal of Hamlet’s mother, driving him crazier. The loss of sanity can have more disastrous effects than physical pain, yet it is still not measured in society. The loss of certainty keeps the mind intrigued as it was mostly the loss of certainty that influenced the actions of hamlet. In a nutshell, apart from revenge and action, Shakespeare has addressed the loss in the broadest aspect, as none other has ever had.

Work Cited

Shakespeare, William. The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. New Folger’s ed. New York: Washington Square Press/Pocket Books, 1992