



DC English IV

World/British Literature

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Justifying the Character of Hamlet

Students find William Shakespeare's works tiring and difficult reads, despite the playwright's 400-year-old literary reputation as a master dramatist.

- Like **Geoffrey Chaucer** in the Fourteenth Century, William Shakespeare is considered a great experimenter of language, plot, and the overall expectations of drama—a renovator of English writing.
- Like Chaucer, Shakespeare's writing is concerned more with **individuality and diversity of experience**.
- Ignoring such obstacles as his sometime **obscure sentence structures**, **evasive metaphors**, and **out dated colloquialisms** embedded in the text, by examining the characterization of the central protagonist from *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, modern readers can uncover issues and situations that apply towards their contemporary lives.

Justifying the Character of Hamlet

Two Universal Themes

- **procrastination** (or non-action)
- **seeking perfectionism** (or unobtainable idealistic goals)

Both characteristics are opposing forces working within the character causing **mental chaos** and **misdirection** in his life.

Furthermore, both themes act as **tragic flaws** within his personality.

From these two main threads of personality traits, Hamlet tries to understand his world and tries to affect changes— all ending in tragic circumstances for himself and his family members.

Justifying the Character of Hamlet

Hamlet finds himself **paralyzed or immobilized** by multiple choices and various responsibilities, personal and familial.

- Throughout the play he struggles to take firm action within his universe and continually fails to alter circumstances within his surrounding environment.
- As a young man he becomes an example of what not to be, a **model of irresponsibility and vagueness**.
- His **stumbling for identity and purpose**, his confusing choices and emotional outbursts show you as a reader of a path not to follow.

Justifying the Character of Hamlet

Hamlet is traditionally labelled as a tragic hero.

Ironically, he can meet the requirements for the modern definition of an **antihero** as well.

Tragic Hero	Antihero
Noble Birth	Acts as Vigilante
Tragic Circumstances in Life	Lacks True Identity
Obsessed with Fate and Past Deeds	Obsessed with Fate and Past Deeds
Tragic Flaw	Tragic Flaw