



SHAKESPEARS
HAMLET

*“IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES, IT WAS THE WORSE
OF TIME.”*

HISTORY

- Shakespear began work on what would soon be his most famous play in (RESEARCH). Since then it has gone on to be his most famous play.
- Alot of speculation has been established regarding where Shakespear got the idea for Hamlet. Was it a book? Was it another play? We may never know.
- What we do know is that the name Hamlet derives from 2 primary places (*entomology*): The word “ham,” meaning “a cooked pig,” and the word “let,” meaning “allow for,” or “give permission to.”

HISTORY

- Shakespear initially wrote the play to subdue the needs of the King, who had an addiction to theater and also women.
- Shakespear collaborated on the project with his theater troop, “The Londontown Players.” (VERIFY) But rumor has is that the play was actually written mainly by Shakespear.

WHAT THE HECK IS IT??

- Hamlet is a play about a young idiot savant who must avenge (REVENGE? CHANGE IF NECESSARY) his father's untimely death from poison.
- I will now briefly summarize each act. But be warned its bloody!!!!

ACT I

- Many proclaim this to be Hamlets scariest act because of ghosts.
- Horatio and some other characters are standing guard outside Elsinore castle when all of a sudden the ghost of Hamlets dead dad from poison appears.
- The ghost doesn't want to talk because like most ghosts in literature its very angry.
- Horatio decides to tell Hamlet about the ghost, as this is the right thing to do as a friend.

ACT I

- We find out that Hamlet's father was killed by none other than his brother, Hamlet's uncle Claudius. Contrary to popular misconceptions, Claudius is not the “fun” kind of uncle that does “funny” things like wink when ladies walk by. Chalk it up to cultural differences, but what we know to be an uncle today was very different than “uncles” in (RESEARCH) century Denmark.
- Hamlet's girlfriend Ophelia is never happy.
- Hamlet meets up with his ghost father, who tells him Claudius put poison in his ear. This sends Hamlet into a whirl, speculated to be because Hamlet already wanted an excuse to kill Claudius. Voila, this opportunity falls into his lap!

ACT I ANALYSIS

- There's a lot of symbolism in this act. All this talk about ghosts leaves the audience with the impression of death, which is a major theme of the play. For this reason, the original Londontown Players productions were held on Halloween.
- The famous line, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark," has caused much speculation. Was Denmark actually a state? If so, did America possibly get that idea from Hamlet?
- Ophelia is never happy.

ACT II

- Ophelia describes Hamlet being “crazy” in her room. She talks about his “crazy eyes” and acts generally scared.
- Professional lackeys Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are hired to make Hamlet happy and maybe keep him from “going over the edge.”

ACT II ANALYSIS

- In his diaries, Shakespear mentions that he kept this act short because during performance the Kings men (or “groundlings,” as they were referred to) often took all there bathroom breaks at this time.
- Sexual tension between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is ramped up to dramatic heights in this act. Critics aren’t really sure why.
- Ophelia is very unhappy.

ACT III

- Hamlet makes everyone watch a really boring play. Some get up and leave, including the king, signifying that even the king finds this boring!
- Polonius hides behind a curtain. Hamlet pierces the curtain in anger, and accidentally stabs Polonius.
- Between stabbing curtains and talking to ghosts, Hamlet's mom knows Hamlet is really crazy.

ACT III ANALYSIS

- By making the play boring, Shakespear was commenting on aristocracy, and how preoccupied they are with other stuff.
- Shakespear continues themes of madness, and also adds voyeurism to the list.

ACT 4

- Hamlet is shipped off to England. Meanwhile, Ophelia, who exhibits signs of unhappiness, begins singing strange songs.
- Hamlet is captured by pirates!
- Ophelia drowns herself in the local pond.
- A plot is hatched to kill Hamlet with a raper.

ACT 4 ANALYSIS

- Much modern speculation happens over Ophelia's death. For instance, why did she drown herself when there's plenty of poison and swords laying around?
- The pirates symbolize conflict in the play.
- A "raper" is an old-timey name for a sword. Often rapers were poisoned on their tips.

ACT V

- Hamlet returns to find two clowns digging Ophelias grave. Hamlet is immediately disgusted by the clowns playing with a skull, but quickly warms to them because they do funny things. They all laugh.
- Ophelias funeral begins and Hamlet begins to cry. He jumps into her grave.

ACT V

- Hamlet and Laertes duel. Unknownst to Hamlet, Laertes has a poisoned raper. But that doesn't kill Hamlet, so Laertes just gives up and tries to make him drink a cup of poison. But the queen drinks it instead and dies. For some reason Hamlet and Laertes switch swords, so Laertes dies. Then Hamlet kills Claudies. Then Hamlet drinks the poison. Fortinbra enters right when Hamlet is dying. Fortinbra decides to take over as king.
- The end.

ACT V ANALYSIS

- The last scene signifies many things. The theme of thirst is explored in depth. Hamlet is not very thirsty, so he doesn't take a drink. The queen is VERY thirsty, so she takes a drink and dies.
- This is most likely the first instance of clowns in literature.
- Some would say that Hamlet's madness finally drove him "over the edge." He spends most of the play talking about crazy things, and contemplating death. In the end, he dies.
- Suicide was never something mentioned in the play, yet here Hamlet is, dead by his own hand (*irony*).

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- Hamlet has gone on to pretty good success. It's one of the most well-known plays from the last couple centuries, and many movies have been made based on it.
- The last scene has inspired movies. Steven Segall has been quoted as saying Hamlet has inspired him a great deal. Kenneth Branagh has also said something similar.
- The “To be or not to be” speech can be seen in a lot of pop culture, from a Burger King commercial to a Counting Crows song to even an Ethan Hawke movie!

IN CONCLUSION

- I really enjoyed this play to no end. While even Shakespear would admit its not his best, or even his funniest, I would put it way up there with Romeo and Juliet.
- Shakespear has blessed us with a truly wonderful blessing. Hamlet is a play full of intrigue, madness, depression, death, and laughter.
- Whether you're young or old, Hamlet tells a tale as old as time. One that will stick in our hearts forever.
- I especially liked the scene with the clowns.

WORKS CITED

- Hamlet
- Ghost Dad
- (ADD MORE)