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REVENGE MOTIF IN THE PLAY HAMLET

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ABSTRACT

The play 'Hamlet' is a revenge tragedy. Throughout the play, several different people want revenge on somebody. Hamlet, the prince of Denmark, wants revenge on the current king of his country, his uncle, who killed Hamlet's father, the original king, in order to take the crown and marry the queen. When trying to revenge his father by killing his uncle, Hamlet accidentally kills Polonius, the father of one of his best friends Laertes. In turn, Laertes wants to revenge his father's death by killing Hamlet. The king of Norway, was killed by Hamlet's father in battle. Now the prince of Norway, Fortinbras, therefore wanted revenge on Denmark.

When the play begins, Hamlet is in a sorrowful mood over the death of his father. What makes it worse is that only a few weeks after, the horrible and untimely death, Hamlet's mother, the queen of Denmark remarries Hamlet's uncle Claudius. One day the ghost of King Hamlet appears before prince Hamlet and tells that his uncle is the one who killed his father. Hamlet should revenge his father's death. Hamlet becomes filled with rage and decides that he must kill his uncle. Finally he takes his revenge upon his uncle Claudius by killing him but he also loses his life. Thus the play Hamlet challenges many of today's conventional thoughts and beliefs particularly about vengeance and deceit, and the consequences of doing wrong. One of the morals of the play Hamlet is to forgive and forget rather than plotting revenge.

Keywords: Conventional, Vengeance, Deceit and Horrible

William Shakespeare has been known as an English poet, playwright and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the History of English language and drama. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon". He wrote 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems and a few other verses. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. Ben Jonson calls 'Shakespeare not of an age, but for all time'. In the 20th and 21st centuries, his works have been repeatedly adapted and rediscovered by new movements in scholarship and performance. His

plays remain highly popular and are constantly studied, performed and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.

Here I am going to express my views on the theme of revenge in the play 'Hamlet'. The play was written between 1599 and 1602 during Elizabethan era. During the Elizabethan era, the revenge plays were well acclaimed. The dramatist pictured the theme of revenge in the play 'Hamlet' beautifully.

Revenge causes the characters in play 'Hamlet' to act blindly through anger and emotion, rather than through reason. Fortinbras, Laertes and Hamlet were all looking to avenge the deaths of

their fathers. They all acted on emotion driven by the want for revenge for their father's deaths, and this led to the downfall of two, and the rise to power of one. Since the heads of the three major families were each murdered, the eldest sons of these families felt that they needed to take some kind of action to avenge their father's deaths; this need to bring honour to their respective families was ultimately the demise of Laertes and Hamlet.

There were three major families in the tragedy of Hamlet. These were the family of King Fortinbras, the family of Polonius, and the family of King Hamlet. Fortinbras, King of Norway, was killed by King Hamlet; slain by sword during a man-to-man battle. This entitled King Hamlet to the land that was possessed by Fortinbras because it was written in a seal'd compact. Polonius was an advisor to the King, and father to Laertes and Ophelia. He was nosy and arrogant, and he did not trust his children, and at one point in the play, using his daughter to probe Hamlet. Young Hamlet killed Polonius while he was secretly listening in on a conversation between Hamlet and his mother. King Hamlet was the King of Denmark, and Hamlet's father. He had killed King Fortinbras, only to be killed by his brother, Claudius. "...My offence is rank, it smells to heaven; A brother's murder..." Each of these events affected the sons of the deceased in the same way.

Laertes found out about his father's death, and immediately returned home. He confronted the King and accused him of the murder of his father. Claudius told Laertes that Hamlet was responsible for his father's death. He then decides to kill Hamlet to avenge the death of his father. He and Claudius enact a plot to kill Hamlet. Hamlet dies of wounds from the poisoned tipped sword Laertes used. ". Hamlet was deeply sorrowed by his father's death. He spoke to a ghost, and this ghost stated that his father's death was a murder, by the hand of his uncle, Claudius. "The serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown." Hamlet was astonished, and then swore vengeance for his father's death. He then proceeded to try and prove his uncle's guilt, and then finally kills him while he himself is dying of poisoned wounds inflicted by Laertes during their duel. This left the King dead, and his father's death avenged.

The lack of thought used in exacting the revenge led to the deaths of both Laertes and Hamlet. Laertes planned with Claudius to kill Hamlet with the poisoned tipped sword, but they had not thought that the sword might be used against them. With Laertes believing the King's accusations that Hamlet had murdered his father, he fights Hamlet and wounds him once with the poisoned tipped sword. Hamlet proceeds to wound Laertes with the same sword, exacting his death. Hamlet had many chances to kill his uncle, but his rage outweighed his better judgement; and he chose to wait until the lord could see no good in Claudius, and then strike him down into a world of eternal damnation. Hamlet waits until he can kill his uncle while he is performing a sin but unfortunately for Hamlet, his next chance to exact revenge on Claudius is his own death. Revenge, being the driving force in the play Hamlet, is also one reason why it is a tragedy. Hamlet makes his revenge everything in his life, consuming him. It is this rage that eventually drives him to madness and murder. It seems ironic that Claudius, Laertes, and Hamlet all died of the same sword. Revenge was the driving force behind three of the main characters of the play, for two it led to downfall, and for the other it led to greatness.

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