

Shakespeare's Tragedy Hamlet Review Essay

Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* is one of the most renowned and influential works in the history of literature. In this play, Shakespeare presents complex characters, each of whom plays a vital role in the development of the plot. Two of them, Laertes and Fortinbras, help reveal Hamlet's character as well as explore the play's major themes of duty, action versus inaction, and sanity versus madness.

Laertes, the son of Polonius, is primarily known for his loyalty to his family and his decisiveness in actions. His loyalty and love for his father and sister, give him the strength to act and protect them. Unlike Hamlet, who oftentimes gets lost in his thoughts, Laertes does not waver in his actions and is ready to fight for his family (Shakespeare 34). This makes him an important contrasting character for Hamlet, whose main function is to highlight his inactivity and indecisiveness.

Fortinbras, the Prince of Norway, also plays a crucial role in the play. Like Laertes, Fortinbras is portrayed as opposite to Hamlet and is characterized by his decisiveness in actions. However, unlike Laertes, Fortinbras mostly strives for power. He portrays machiavellianist traits of character and does not hesitate to use any means necessary to achieve his goal, including violence and rebellion. In his pursuit for power, Fortinbras reminds Hamlet of his obligations to his people and his father (Shakespeare 46). He also shows Hamlet that constant inactivity and daydreaming might lead to the loss of power and respect. Thus, Fortinbras acts as a catalyst for Hamlet, who pushes him to start the fight for the throne.

Duty is one of the main themes in the play "Hamlet". Each of the characters has their own obligations and responsibilities to their family, people, and state. In the play, Laertes strives to protect his family, Fortinbras craves power, and Hamlet seeks answers to complex philosophical questions. However, by the end of the play, each of them realizes that they do poses several obligations and takes responsibility for their actions.

The theme of action against inaction also plays an important role in the play. Hamlet is a prime example of inaction, tormented by doubts and fear of the unknown. He wavers, postpones his actions and is unable to find the courage to solve his problems. Laertes and Fortinbras, on the other hand, are men of action that goes hand in hand with the topic determination and courage. They are ready to make complex decisions and act for the good of their people and their families.

The topic of sanity versus madness is one of the most prominent in the play. Hamlet is portrayed as a person who is tormented by internal conflicts and faced with complex philosophical questions. He is unable find answers to these questions and therefore slowly starts to lose his sanity (Shakespeare 54). Laertes and Fortinbras, on the other hand, are examples of sanity and rationality. They know what they need to do and how to act in difficult situations, which helps them maintaining their clarity of mind.

Thus, Laertes and Fortinbras are vital characters in Shakespeare's play "Hamlet", whose primary function is to serve as a background for revealing the main character and themes of the play. Both of them emphasize certain traits of Hamlet's character, as well as reflect the themes of duty, action against inaction, and sanity versus madness. Their determination and courage, responsibility and sanity assist Hamlet in his striving to act for the good of his people and the state.

Work Cited

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Edited by G. R. Hibbard, Oxford UP, 2008.