

Oedipus and Hamlet Compare and Contrast Essay Outline

Both Hamlet and Oedipus are popular characters in the world of literature. They depict their exceptional characters with their actions, strengths, weaknesses and conflicts. The stories' plot revolves around these characters which make the readers more involved in what they do. Their fathers engaged in disagreements. They also made choices which affected these characters and also led to their eventual destruction. Although these characters have similarities, their differences are clear. Their relations with people in royal positions differ. Lets compare the two in this Comparison Essay Between Oedipus and Hamlet.

Hamlet is the Denmark's throne heir. Oedipus is the Thebes' king in Sophocles. The two characters are royals in the ruling families. In the story, Hamlet is faced with the consequences of the conflict that ensued between his father and brother. The greed to take over the throne causes a brother to kill the old Hamlet. The loss for a father causes the young hamlet to mourn deeply. He also mourns because he does not know how to handle his mother's marriage to his uncle who killed his father. On realizing that his uncle called Claudia killed his father, he tries to kill him.

The love for his father causes him anger and rage when he knows that his killer still lives. At the end of the story, he revenges his father's death by killing his uncle and destroying his castle. Claudius' death comes with his death as well.

On the other hand, Oedipus never knew his father. He also did not have a chance to relate with him due to the situation that required that he slay his own father and then marry his mother. After Oedipus was born, his father sent killers to him as a way of preventing a prophecy from turning true. Nevertheless, he was sold to barren king and queen by a shepherd that was asked to kill him. He fled to Thebes on hearing about this prophecy because he feared that this could harm his parents.

Oedipus kills Lauis after which he marries Jocasta. This fulfills the prophecy although Oedipus does not know it. The decision of his father to kill him on his birth led to his departure to Thebes. Here, he marries his own mother on killing Lauis the king. On realizing this, he hates himself. Eventually, he leaves this city destroyed. The two characters are similar since they suffer and eventually die due to the decisions made by their fathers. They are destroyed by strong influence of their fathers on them.

Both Hamlet and Oedipus played a nobility role and had tragic flaws which caused their downfall. They achieve self-realization during downfall. They get to a point where what has been hidden from them for a long time is revealed making them realize the truth. Oedipus flees and eventually meets his fate on hearing Apollo speak of the prophecy. He realizes the truth when he learns that he killed the king and that he had married his mother. This is when he realizes that the prophecy had passed.

Just like Oedipus, Hamlet was incestuous with his own mother. Hamlet is deeply hurt by the new relationship of his mother to an extent of describing the re-marriage as wicked. He calls it incestuous sheet (Act 1 scene 2). The great love that Hamlet felt for his mother made him not to kill Claudius at some points because he perceived himself in Claudius while he was close to her own mother (Sawyer & Desmet 176).

Both characters are depicted as tragic heroes with their tragic flaws affecting them and leading them to destruction. Oedipus causes pollution that causes the suffering of Thebes. According to him, finding and revenging Laui's killer will protect him or enable him to take the king's son position as well as to save Thebes. After the king's murder is uncovered, he learns that he ran away from the prophecy but it has turned true due to his swiftness in acting and tragic anger's flaw. He learns that he was the cause of the suffering that the people were enduring (Sophocles & Mulroy).

The indecisiveness of Hamlet also makes him to postpone his uncle's murder severally although he killed his own father. His father's ghost convinces him but he has doubts. Self-doubt causes him to think and to waste time till when he goes to England where his uncle sends him.

Although both characters share similar fate, they possess different traits as well. When Oedipus becomes the king, he acts quickly when his people requires him to. During his reign in Thebes, he is confident and swift. He is always in motion as he attempt to keep pace with destiny. As a good leader, he responds to his people's needs. When Thebes is hit by plague, he swiftly sends Creon to Delphi to seek advice from the Oracle. This enabled him to save Thebes from a deadly sphinx curse.

His subjects respected him and they proclaimed the name of their king due to his qualities; 'here I am myself-you all know me, the world knows my fame: I am Oedipus' (p 7-8). However, the tragedy ends when his name becomes a curse to a level where mentioning it filled the people with fear. His Aristotle regarded him as a person that is extra ordinary instead of typical (p 1117). In Act 1 scene one, the priest describes him as the greatest power.

Despite having a noble birth, Hamlet does not have extra ordinary traits. He was born as a prince. His aim was to murder Claudius and avenge his father's death. However, in scene 1 act three he appears to change his thoughts when he says, "I will observe his looks, I will tent him to the quick, if I do blench, I know my course. The spirit I have seen may be a devil." This indicates that even after getting information from his father's ghost, he doubted his intended action and therefore he acted slowly (Miller 7). Inaction is the main flaw of Hamlet. On seeing that Fortibras would risk everything he had just for a land during the war, he learns that he had taken so long to revenge his father's death. This is when he regrets for not risking for sake of the soul of his father. His people loved and admired him because he saved them from the plagues and the riddle that Sphinx posed to them.

Hamlet's personality was suicidal and he hated his fate and himself. He astutely observes and participates in his life. Hamlet is an enigma that many critics are yet to understand. He knows

the decay of the Danish society though he comprehends that the evils in the society should not be blamed on a single person. Hamlet is exceedingly considerate and coherent (FEEC). He is seen as being drawn to hard decisions and questions that are difficult to answer. Oedipus on the other hand is proud and he feels that people should respect him. He is confident about himself.

The situation in Denmark ranging from that of his family dissatisfies and depresses Hamlet. His mother disappoints him when he accepts to his uncle's relationship and marriage after killing his father. He utters words that depict his lack of trust for women. He uses philosophical terms while thinking about Denmark's problems. He takes time to think about the threats of security in Denmark which can cause its destabilization. Oedipus always has the needs of the people in his heart. This is seen when he does everything possible to know what is causing misfortunes to his people in Thebes. He also does everything he could to know who killed King Louis although he later realizes that he did.

Hamlet possesses a moral and religious reasoning and this keeps him from executing his father's will. He thinks of life that follows after death more often and he is also indecisive. He has the desire to avenge the death of his father in an accepted and moral way. He has a perceptible moral awareness but obviously this is against murder. This is how he prays at some point,

"He kneels and prays,

And now I'll do it, and so he goes to heaven,

And so am I revenged: that would be scanned.

He killed my father, and for that,

I, his sole son, send him to heaven.

Why this is reward, not revenge.

Up sword and know thou a more horrid time,

When he is drunk, asleep, or in a rage." (Sophocles and Mulroy).

Hamlet has many thoughts without action. However, he is able to overcome this flaw at the end on realizing the honor that people held on revenge and war. He learns about his lack of and wavering willpower. Contrary to this, Oedipus wastes no time contemplating. Instead, he uses actions in solving his problems. He kills his own father due to his quick action though unknowingly. Oedipus does not possess morality issues or religious thoughts that can hinder him from taking actions.

Hamlet and Oedipus fate was predetermined. Oedipus left Thebes on realizing what his destiny was to ensure the good of all the people after serving them properly. Hamlet also realizes that

he failed his father due to his indecisiveness. Both characters learn about their destinies after achieving self-realization and learning the hidden secrets. This sends them down to the trail that leads them to tragic ends. My opinion is that Thebes' people loved Oedipus and he was heroic. He also did many things for the people as compared to the Danish people and what Hamlet did for them.

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