

Hamlet

Act 2, Scene 2, pg 119-127

Alex N, James T, Emila, Adamina

Summarizer - James Tilgner

The speech given by the first player is in reference to the Iliad. In the Iliad, Priam, king of Troy, is killed, and as he dies the city begins to collapse around him. “Then Senseless Ilium seeming to feel his blow, with flaming top, stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash takes prisoner Pyrrhus’ ear.” (2.2.471-474) This quote references the fall of a great nation due to the death of a King, which perhaps acts as foreshadowing for future events in the play. This also relates to the doubts Hamlet has later in the scene.

Summarizer - James Tilgner

While earlier, Hamlet appeared to be mad with love/grief to Ophelia, and was by all accounts not mentally sound, here we see him not only acting in a coherent fashion, but putting together an intricate and intelligent plot. "The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king," (2.2.02-603). This shows us Hamlet's plot to use the play in order to prove (at least in Hamlet's mind) that Claudius killed the previous king. This shows us how Hamlet is actually sound of mind and not at all insane as Ophelia and her father thought or perhaps his mental health is fractured but he is not as "mad" as Polonius and Ophelia believe. This scene also gives insight into the reason as to why Hamlet may not have acted yet on his desire to avenge his father: he needs confirmation of Claudius's guilt so that he can bring himself to kill the man. This is another insight into Hamlet's morals. He not only expects others to be loyal, but he feels that he must be loyal. Right now he is being torn between loyalty to his dead father, his uncle, the women in his life and his religious beliefs (his God).

Summarizer - James Tilgner

Hamlet has a moment of doubt after listening to the player give his speech. Hamlet thinks that the ghost he talked to might not have been telling the complete truth. He talks about the devil and how he can take forms that one such as he would easily believe, and decides to find his own evidence. "I'll have grounds more relative than this," (2.2.601-602). This evidence will come in the form of Claudius's reaction to the play. This really shows how Hamlet is doubtful of his plans, which shows a sharp contrast to the bold oaths he made when talking with the ghost.

Hamlet also has doubts due to the speech given by the player about Ilium, and how when the king dies the nation falls apart. Hamlet is worried that killing Claudius will lead to disaster.

Characterization - Alex N

Hamlet

In act 2, scene 2 Hamlet is preparing a play to be performed in front of King Claudius in the hope that it will make him feel guilt and show signs that would not be portrayed by an innocent man. This shows that Hamlet is being increasingly consumed by hatred and revenge. "Play something like the murder of my father / Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks.

/ I'll tent him to the quick. If he do blench, / I know my course. The spirit that I have seen" (Hamlet, act 2, scene 2, 557). This shows Hamlet is filled with rage when he says "I know my course" as if Hamlet is already plotting what to do when Claudius is revealed as guilty.

Hamlet likes to plan things - he is a thinker rather than a man of action. He says that he knows his course and he told the ghost that he would act, but as the play progresses, he fails to act. He is even frustrated with himself in this Act for his lack of action when he sees that an actor is moved more easily than him.

Characterization - Alex N

The first player affects Hamlet emotionally when he presents the play of the Trojans to him. "Am I a coward? Who calls me 'villain'?" (act 2, scene 2, 530). Hamlet sees how the first player portrayed so much emotion in his play and is ashamed at himself because of how much motive he has but how little passion he has shown towards getting revenge on his uncle.

Style - Emila

Allusion

Shakespeare references, “Pyrrhus.../ he lay couched in the ominous horse” (2.2.449,451). Pyrrhus was the warrior in the infamous Trojan Horse, as Hamlet described in admiration. He additionally credits this historical reference to, “Aeneas’ tale to Dido” (2.2.443), which are characters in The Aeneid, a Latin poem. The allusion provides a symbolic meaning of the Trojan Horse and Pyrrhus, connecting the war to current affairs in the play, such as the war with Denmark.

This reference alludes to the appearance vs reality motif that has been exposed throughout the play. The Trojan horse appeared to be a gift to show loyalty, but in reality it was an attack to destroy the king. This reminds the reader that a person must always question the loyalties of others because the world is an uncertain place as Hamlet has learned during the play.

Style - Emila

Imagery

Throughout the scene, Shakespeare employs plenty of descriptive language when depicting Pyrrhus, “black complexion” (2.2.452), “o’ersized with coagulate gore” (2.2.459). These illustrations portrays Pyrrhus as a fierce, strong, and deadly warrior. Pyrrhus led the Trojan War to seek revenge against the King of Troy, Priam, for his father’s death. This is a direct connection they share, showing how Pyrrhus is role-modelled to Hamlet for seeking vengeance. Pyrrhus acts as an important foil to Hamlet because he is acting on his desire for revenge and obeying his duty to his father, but Hamlet is having difficulty taking action as mentioned in the Juxtaposition below.

Juxtaposition

As Hamlet characterizes Pyrrhus as a powerful individual, he compares himself to the warrior, his model. At the end, in Hamlet’s aside, he says, “Am I a coward?” (2.2.567) and continues on to question his own strength, reflecting on his father’s death. The two have a contrasting effect, being described as opposites. Hamlet feels as he should seek revenge, being as formidable as Pyrrhus.

Connector - Adamina

Filial Piety:

- Divinity of Kings, respect and reputation of Kings
- Patriarchal society, views, ideals
- Actor's remorse and emotions versus Hamlet's own
- Internal conflict caused by filial piety or lack thereof

“... He would drown the stage with tears / And cleave the general ear with horrid speech, / ... / Yet I, / A dull and muddly-mettled rascal, peak, / Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause, / And can say nothing; no, not for a king, / Upon whose property and most dear life / A damn'd defeat was made” (2.2.557-567).