

# Hamlet Performance and Analysis

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Act 3, Scene 1, Line 1-91

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Summary → Jordan



# Summary

- Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern are gathered in the hall of Elsinore
- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern talk to Claudius about how they have tried to talk to Hamlet about what is causing him to act crazy
- They say that Hamlet is unwilling to answer them
- Gertrude asks if they have been able to engage Hamlet in any enjoyable activities
- Rosencrantz says he has brought a few actors to the castle which makes Claudius happy
- After Rosencrantz and Guildenstern leave, Claudius asks the queen to leave as well
- The king and Polonius plan to hide and spy on Hamlet and Ophelia to determine if love is driving him mad
- Before Polonius and the king hide, Claudius speaks in an aside revealing feelings of guilt for the first time
- Hamlet enters and begins contemplating suicide in a soliloquy (Shakespeare's most renowned soliloquy)
- Hamlet's soliloquy is interrupted when he noticed Ophelia reading from her prayer book

Connector → Ryan



# Connector

“*[T]hen fly to others that we know not of*”(Shakespeare 3.1.83-84).

The fact that Hamlet is contemplating suicide also connects back to the symptoms of melancholy. It hints to the reader that this madness act is not entirely an act anymore (if it ever was one). Hamlet is demonstrating symptoms of melancholy in introspective moments.

In this act Hamlet is struggling with whether death is better than life. We see this during Hamlet's soliloquy where he is wrestling with the decision to end his pain and suffering or to keep on living because of his fear that the afterlife may be worse "*then fly to others that we know not of*"(Shakespeare.3.1.83-84). Suicide is a topic that frequently comes up in Shakespeare's play all centered around the main idea of fear of the unknown. In connecting to *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* this motif becomes apparent because they all touch on suicide that is connected to a fear of the unknown. In *Romeo and Juliet* Romeo decides to commit suicide after seeing Juliet in the tomb and assumes that she is dead.

Characterization → Sam



# Characterization

- People around Hamlet continue to notice his melancholy

→ *“And can you, by no drift of circumstance, Get from him why he puts on this confusion, Grating so harshly all his days of quiet, With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?”* (3.1.1-4).

- Hamlet is showing clues to him being depressed

→ *“To be or not to be: that is the question”* (3.1.57-58).

- Hamlet shows uncertainty

→ *“To die: to sleep: No more”* (3.1.61-62).

Notice that there is increased exposure to Hamlet's true melancholy. The audience is getting confirmation that this is not entirely an act because of the soliloquy being a moment of introspection and not an opportunity to fool others.

Style → Jack





# Style, Plot Development

*Nor do we find him forward to be sounded.  
But with a crafty madness keeps aloof  
When we would bring him on to some confession  
Of his true state.*

***Oxymoron, Dramatic Irony***

- Shakespeare uses an oxymoron to contrast "crafty" and "madness"
- Shows Hamlet's state; acts crazy but Guildenstern and Rosencrantz can tell that he's onto something and trying to achieve a goal by an indirect and/or sneaky method
- Helps to show the audience that the other characters are becoming suspicious of Hamlet's true intentions even though the audience already knows

# Style, Theme of Guilt

*“[W]ith devotion’s visage  
And pious action we do sugar o’er  
The devil himself”.*

***Metaphor***

*The harlot’s cheek, beautied with plastering art,  
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it  
Than is my deed to my most painted word.  
O heavy burden!*

***Metaphor***

- In this passage, Polonius talks to Ophelia about how people make it seem like they are loyal to God in order to cover up their bad deeds
- Is indirectly talking about Claudius
- Claudius admits to himself that he is guilty of the murder of Hamlet’s Father
- Feels so guilty that he compares himself to a “harlot’s cheek” covered in “plastering art” which shows how he is identifying himself due to the internal guilt he feels
- This makes the audience feel some sympathy for Claudius - he becomes a flawed human rather than a murderous beast. Connected to the uncertainty motif.

# Style, Theme of Uncertainty

*“Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's  
contumely,  
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,”*  
**Irony, Parallelism, Anaphora, Amplification**

*“When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin?”*  
**Rhetorical Question**

- This shows Hamlet explaining all the awful things that he must live with in his life
- Hamlet is saying that the system is depressing even though he is accustomed to the divine right of kings and is willing to fight for it (to defend his father). This reveals one of the main motivators for his melancholy: he is torn between his duty to his father (and his kingdom) and his duty to himself. (This makes me reflect again on the earlier quote: to thine own self be true).
- Uses parallelism, anaphora and amplifies his point with a lot of information
- Immediately after, asks why someone wouldn't simply end it and stop the suffering
- Hamlet feels as though his identity is insignificant due to external factors
- The fact that Hamlet asks a question shows the theme of uncertainty

# Style, Theme of Uncertainty (cont'd)

*“To be, or not to be? That is the question”*

*Antithesis*

- The use of the Antithesis shows Hamlet torn between two ideas; is it better to be alive or dead.
- Shows Hamlet's uncertainty and his true state regarding his mental health.