

Sample Essay Marking



Essay Marked In: 14h, 43min, 24 sec

Essay Question:

In his representations of human nature, Shakespeare's play Hamlet reinforces the ongoing importance of relationships. To what extent does your interpretation of Hamlet support this view?

Essay Submission:

While, Shakespeare's Hamlet to a significant extent, represents the duplicity of human nature to reinforce that ongoing importance of human relationships in a world subsumed by corruption, he also undermines the importance of human relationships by illuminating their futility through the tragic death of Ophelia. **<Why jump immediately to Ophelia in the opening sentence?? You need a thesis statement about the totality of relationships in the play, then move on to discuss a number of them separately>**. Shakespeare represents the duplicity of the human condition through Claudius and Gertrude's 'seeming' who use human relationships for political power. However, through emphasizing Hamlet's psychological torment as a result of truthful relationships not being attainable, Shakespeare seeks to position audiences to realise the ongoing importance of human relationships to ensure that this is not our future. **<I doubt whether he was writing a sociological textbok for the future. Be careful with such open statements>**.

Yet, the characterization of Ophelia seeks to undermine the importance of human relationships, as her truthful human nature and obedient relationships sees her demise.?? **< decline into madness and suicide. Make it clear in your terminology>**

Claudius' first highly politicized speech where he tries to create unity reveals the duplicity inherent in human nature. This is highlighted through his use of collective pronouns "to be contracted in one brow of woe". However, by Claudius using Gertrude as a metaphorical "jointress" in an attempt to bridge immoral and unorthodox transition from old Hamlet to Claudius as King, "...sometimes sister, now our queen/Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state", Shakespeare highlights the importance of his relationship with Gertrude, to adopt old King Hamlet's sovereignty **<yes>**. However, the entrance of Hamlet after Claudius' speech in which he alludes to Gertrude's and Claudius' "seeming" downplays the importance of relationships in ensuring that a world subsumed by corruption does not become our future,? **<The play is set in a medieval Denmark a century or more before Shakespeare's Elizabethan period.He is making a point about the disruption to the monarchical state, not about the distant future we live in>**. "Seems madam, nay it is I know not seems, **<rest of quote needed in the middle here>** which within my passes show". The Meta language or performance draws the audience's attention to the notion of 'seeming' in order to highlight that relationships can become dangerous when they are only seen as important for political power. **<yes, but Hamlet's grief and disturbance comes in this early scene from the horror he feels at what he sees as a much too rapid, (disrespectful to old Hamlet's memory) 'incestuous' marriage which has erased his respect for both mother and uncle. Keep the politics to a minimum if you are meant to focus on relationships>**. Shakespeare makes his warning much more urgent about the danger of relationships when used for immoral leaders to come to power, through the psychological torment of Hamlet in his first soliloquy "O that this too too solid flesh would melt". Hyperbolic language reveals Hamlet as distraught and unhinged **<not quite so early in the play>**. to makes his warning about truthful relationships much more urgent. By representing that relationships based on loyalty and trust are unattainable in Hamlet's world, Shakespeare positions his audience to see the disastrous effects the exploitation human relationships for political purposes has on the individual. As the play progresses and chaos ensues Shakespeare highlights the effect Claudius and Gertrude's fashioned relationship has on Hamlet's state of mind. **<What of Hamlet's relationship with Horatio? What of the possessive, protective brotherly relationship of Laertes with Ophelia? >**

Shakespeare represents human nature through the re-occurring motif of espionage and the effect it has on the erosion of loyalty, to position his audience to see the on-going importance of human relationships. Hamlet's unpredictable and uncontrollable? anti-disposition sees Claudius and Gertrude **< what part does she play in this?>** use Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on Hamlet, "draw him into your pleasures and glean as much

from the occasion as you may". Claudius' manipulative tone and R+G actions highlights that when the corrupt and deceiving side of the human condition supersedes moral justice, relationships are eroded. **<yes. How does Hamlet respond to their obvious spying? Reference the 'you were sent for'/ 'play on a pipe' dialogue>**. Shakespeare highlights the effect this has on Hamlet, and therefore the importance of human relationships in Hamlet's "what a piece of work is a man!" Speech, "how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties!"

By acting as a choric voice and providing powerful insights into the possibility of human nature, Shakespeare's warning becomes much more poignant about the importance of human relationships to ensure that this does not become our future.?? By highlighting the uncertainty of human nature in Hamlet's "to be or not to be" soliloquy the audience begin to see the effect dubious relationships have on the certainty of the individual as Hamlet questions the uncertainties surrounding life and death. **<Surely the 'to be or not to be' is not quite about relationships-- unless you mean his own relationship to religious teaching and fear of the consequences of suicide? ... and... At the end of the 'what is a man' speech he bluntly tells R&G that 'man delights me not'. Make a comment on this. What does it say about his capacity for human relationships at this point in the play. This all changes in a number of ways in the graveyard scene after he has returned from exile. He ponders his previous feelings for Yorick the clown in a fond manner, and professes later that he loved Ophelia more than 'ten thousand brothers'. Make wider use of the play's action and dialogue.>**

However, by Shakespeare illuminating the character of Ophelia who tries to create relationships that evolve around trust and obedience, he undermines the importance of relationships as it is just that that leads to Ophelia's demise.**<DEATH>**. Ophelia's obedient relationship with Polonius is evident when she gives all the token she received from Hamlet out of filial duty "I have a daughter- have while she is mine- who in her duty and obedience, mark, hath given me this". Through Polonius' language of ownership Shakespeare highlights the importance of his relationship with Ophelia in enabling him to increase his power and significance within Claudius' eyes. However, through Ophelia's suicide, Shakespeare highlights the futility of human nature's positive side in a world subsumed by corruption, "...her garments, heavy with their drink, /pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay/To muddy death". The horrific imagery highlights that Ophelia's dutiful relationships in a flawed and illusive system, ultimately led to her death, undermining the view regarding the ongoing importance of relationships.**<You need to look at how Hamlet's verbal taunts and changeable behaviour undermine her sanity and lead to her suicide. Think of the 'Mousetrap' scene.>**

Shakespeare's cautionary play **<about the disturbance to the Great Chain of Being in political/national affairs, In what way is it 'cautionary' about human relationships?>** Hamlet, examines the complexities of the human condition to highlight the importance of human relationships in ensuring that a world where corruption has superseded moral justice does not become our future. However, Shakespeare undermines the importance of human relationships and the tragic consequences they have on the demise of the individual. Therefore the statement is only true to a limited extent.

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Mark: 15-17/20

Final Feedback:



Hi Tom,

There are some very solid points made in this essay about human nature and the disturbance to human relationships. My comments above are an indication of how you can widen your focus to a number of key relationships which you have omitted so far or others you have not developed enough. Think in terms of pairs-- Hamlet with his father (and his ghost), Hamlet with his mother, Hamlet with Ophelia, Hamlet with Horatio-- and use scenes and dialogue to bring out what importance these have. You have done a reasonable job so far on R&G, Claudius, Polonius-- but try to maintain focus on the human rather than the political--in accord with the thrust of this particular question. Keep up the hard work.