

What Madness Represents in Hamlet--- Aspects of Hamlet's and Ophelia's Insanity ---

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Abstract

Hamlet is a complex play which deals with several interrelated themes and is full of riddles. The most obvious theme in the play is the taking of revenge and the biggest riddle is Hamlet's delay. The taking of revenge in Hamlet is intimately interrelated with the themes of faithlessness, love, and ambition. In the development of these themes, madness is a significant element in the text. Through the dense texture of the play's layers of complexity, the play contrasts madness and sanity, faithlessness and honour, the urge for revenge with the desire not to act precipitately. Hamlet's insanity is contrasted with Ophelia's madness: Hamlet's scholar's garb, his 'suits of solemn black' with Ophelia's virginal and vacant white, and Hamlet's pretended insanity with Ophelia's real madness. Shakespeare does not provide all the 'answers', all necessary clues that allow one to put together all these characters and fully understand their speeches, actions and motivations.
