

# TOPICS FOR EXPOSITORY ESSAY WRITING



- Focus on the role of the minor characters in Hamlet. Explore the role they play in revealing the main topic and the contribution they make to the development of major characters.
- Can we say that Hamlet is indecisive? Why was he not ready to take revenge? What was his motivation to take his own life?
- Do you agree with the statement that the struggle between the good and evil is the central theme of this play? Support your position with the analysis of the opposing characters.
- Hamlet explores the conflict between the reality and the appearance. Evaluate the following statement: unwillingness to accept the reality is the main theme in the play.
- Was Ophelia's decision to end life wise? What other options did she have? If you could give her advice, what would it be?
- Describe the relationship between the protagonist and Polonius's daughter. Was the feeling of love reciprocal?
- What role did Rosencrantz and Guildenstern play in the story?
- Explore Shakespeare's descriptive technique.
- Analyze the comedy in Hamlet. Which techniques does Shakespeare use to produce humor?
- Analyze the theme of suicide in the play.

# Analytical Essay Topics

- Compare the character of Polonius with the 'good courtier' described by Castiglione. Does Polonius have the attribute of such a courtier? Support your claims with evidence from the play and Castiglione's text.
- What is the nature of Hamlet's psychological distress? Was his illness true or did he imitate it? If this was an imitation, what was the motivation behind it? Did his actions ever get out of hand? Justify your claims with quotations from the text.
- Was the protagonist misogynistic? What was his attitude towards women? How did he treat them? Does his treatment of women help clarify the themes of the play? Discuss the manner in which Hamlet speaks of sexuality.
- Analyze the 1996 film and try to answer these questions asked by Goethe: What was the artist's intention? How well did they cope with it? Was it worth the efforts?
- Define justice and analyze it based on Hamlet. To what extent does family influence one's understanding of justice? Can we justify Hamlet's revenge?
- Analyze the outer and inner conflict of Hamlet. How well does he handle them?
- Would you say that Hamlet is a better illustration of Oedipus complex than Oedipus himself? Refer to prophecies, omens, and superstitious signs found in Hamlet and Oedipus Rex.
- How does Shakespeare construct imagery in the third act of Hamlet?

What influence does this have on the rest of the play?

- Was Hamlet's famous monologue nihilistic? What compelled him to become active as opposed to passive?
- Hamlet, Polonius, and Laertius have one thing in common – they are all looking for truth. How does each of them understand this concept? How do they manage to realize the truth?
- Analyze the evolution of Hamlet as a character. Does he change by the end of the play? Does he become wiser?
- Discuss the role of setting in the play. How does it help convey the author's message?
- The true nature of Hamlet is concealed under several layers. What are they? What functions does each of them perform?
- Hamlet's ideas of sin and salvation change throughout the play. Analyze this change and say how it is shaped by the changes in the protagonist's character.
- What do you think are the reasons behind Hamlet's indecisiveness? Is he aware of his indecisiveness?
- Compare Shakespeare's Hamlet to the Hamlets played by Mel Gibson and Kenneth Branagh in the film adaptations.
- Explore Hamlet's attitude to women by analyzing his relationships either with Ophelia or Gertrude. How do these relationships influence the character, the conflict, and the outcome of the play? Do these women help the prince change?
- How does the prince perceive death? Is he afraid of it? Support your position with the evidence from the text.

- Compare Hamlet and King Lear. To some extent, both characters were victims of the circumstances and they were dangerous. Why do you think Shakespeare's plays have such a tendency?
- Throughout the play, Hamlet has serious mood swings. What makes his moods change so often?
- Is protagonist a hero or a villain?
- Describe the relationships between Hamlet and Claudius. Do you think the latter knows what the former is capable of? Does Hamlet know the true motivation behind Claudius' actions? Refer to specific moments in the play that signify their awareness. Support your claims with quotes. How does this knowledge (or the lack of thereof) make them perceive the events in a certain fashion?
- Choose one theme in the play and analyze how Shakespeare develops it. Explain why you chose this theme. Find a place where this theme is mentioned for the first time and analyze it. What literary techniques does the author use to develop it? Your own choice of the theme will make your topic stand out from the rest of the essay topics for Hamlet.
- Analyze the work "Dante's Explanation of Hell". How is it related to Hamlet, particularly, in the way it describes revenge?
- How does Hamlet's character evolve? Base your analysis upon the monologues of this character. You can pick one specific trait of the character and see how it changes throughout the play or even within a monologue.
- How does the play describe the motif of revenge, friendship or love? Perform a close reading of the play and base your analysis on it.

- How does introspection in the play shape the actions of Hamlet? Choose one speech for analysis and support your claims with evidence from it.
- Focus on the characters of Hamlet, Claudius, Fortinbras, or King Hamlet to analyze the themes of honor and corruption in the play. Choose a prominent personality in the modern-day society that has the same features as the character you have described and compare them.
- Analyze the second scene in Act 5. How does this scene reveal the emotional and psychological development of Hamlet? Which lines define the ending as inevitable?
- Can Hamlet be treated as a play, in which nothing can be taken at face value? How does the author deceive its reader? What techniques are used to preserve the secret? Why does this deception mean something in Hamlet?

## Critical Essay Topics for Hamlet

- Hamlet has an opportunity to take revenge at his uncle. Why does not he do this? Would it be right for the prince to avenge his father?
- Choose one act in the play and explore its most prominent themes.
- Is Ophelia a significant person in Hamlet's life? Was his love for her sincere? Does he stop loving her after she died? Substantiate your position with evidence from the play.
- Read Aristotle's definition of tragedy. Does Hamlet fit this definition? Does Hamlet's suicide make the play a tragedy? Evaluate the

character of Hamlet against the criteria described by Aristotle.

- Tell what Hamlet is about in three sentences. Is this play important to you? What is your attitude towards this literary work?
- Can we say that Hamlet is a play about grieving? Is Hamlet depressed? How does he try to overcome the depression and get rid of suicidal thoughts? As a result of what circumstances has he ended up in such a state? What is Hamlet's attitude towards humanity?
- Does Hamlet suffer from some psychological disorder? If yes, which one? Which symptoms does he have? Incorporate evidence from the text to support each 'diagnosis.'