

# Shakespeare's Hamlet - Comparison of Gertrude and Ophelia

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## Hamlet -- Comparison of Gertrude and Ophelia

Gertrude and Ophelia occupy the leading roles for females in the Shakespearean drama Hamlet. As women they share many things in common: attitudes from others, shallow or simple minds and outlooks, etc. This essay will delve into what they have in common.

The protagonist's negative attitude toward both women is an obvious starting point. John Dover Wilson explains in *What Happens in Hamlet* how the prince holds both of the women in disgust:

The difficulty is not that, having once loved [Ophelia](#), Hamlet ceases to do so. This is explained, as most critics have agreed, by his mother's conduct which has put him quite out of love with Love and has poisoned his whole imagination. The exclamation "[Frailty](#) thy name is woman!" in the first soliloquy, we come to feel later, embraces Ophelia as well as Gertrude, while in the bedroom scene he as good as taxes his mother with destroying his capacity for affection, when he accuses her of

such an act

That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,

Calls virtue [hypocrite](#), takes off the rose

From the fir forehead of an innocent love

And sets a blister there.

Moreover, it is clear that in the tirades of the nunnery scene he is thinking almost as much of his mother as of Ophelia. (101)

Other critics agree that both women are recipients of Hamlet's ill-will. In the Introduction to *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Hamlet*, David Bevington enlightens the reader regarding the similarities between Gertrude and Ophelia as the hero sees them:

Yet to Hamlet, Ophelia is no better than another Gertrude: both are tender of heart but submissive to the will of importunate men, and so are forced into uncharacteristic vi...

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