

Shakespeare's Hamlet Essay: Who is Gertrude?

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Hamlet –Who is Gertrude?

This essay intends to explore Gertrude's situation in the play in an attempt to answer many questions about her, the queen, wife of Claudius and former wife of his deceased brother, King Hamlet.

Back in 1883 Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Lectures and Notes on Shakspeare and Other English Poets comments on what he interprets as a problem or [inconsistency](#) in the presentation of the character Gertrude in Shakespeare's tragedy, Hamlet:

Ham. A bloody deed;- almost as bad, good mother,

As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

Queen. As kill a king?

I confess that Shakspeare has left the character of the Queen in an unpleasant perplexity. Was she, or was she not, conscious of the fratricide? (364-365)

Remember that the ghost does tell Hamlet not to prosecute the queen, but only Claudius. So she would seem to be innocent of the murder.

At the outset of the drama, Hamlet's mother is apparently disturbed by her son's appearance in solemn black at the gathering of the court, and she requests of him:

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,

And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

Do not for ever with thy veiled lids

Seek for thy noble father in the dust:

Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,

Passing through nature to [eternity](#). (1.2)

The queen obviously considers her son's dejection to result from his father's demise. She joins the king in asking Hamlet to stay in Elsinore rather than returning to Wittenberg. Respectfully the prince replies, "I shall in all my best [obey](#) you, madam." So at the outset the audience notes a decidedly good relation...

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