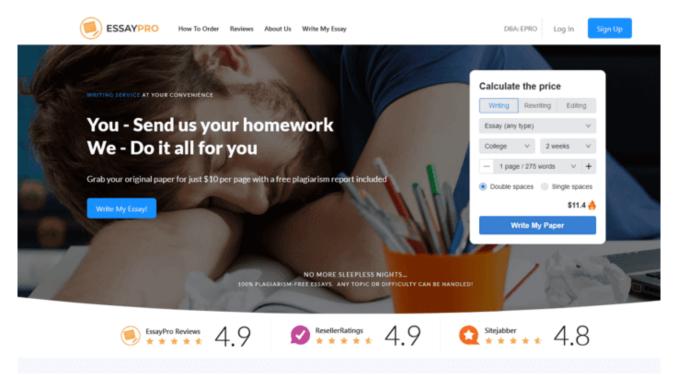
Shakespeare's Hamlet - The Character of Ophelia



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Hamlet: The Character of OpheliaConcerning the Ophelia of Shakespeare's tragic drama Hamlet, is she an innocent type or not? Is she a victim or not? This essay will explore these and other questions related to this character. Rebecca West in "A Court and World Infected by the Disease of Corruption" viciously, and perhaps unfoundedly, attacks the virginity of Ophelia: There is no more bizarre aspect of the misreading of Hamlet's character than the assumption that his relations with Ophelia were innocent and that Ophelia was a correct and timid virgin of exquisite sensibilities. . . . She was not a chaste young woman. That is shown by her tolerance of Hamlet's obscene conversations, which cannot be explained as consistent with the custom of the time. If that were the reason for it, all the men and women in Shakespeare's plays, Romeo and Juliet, Beatrice and Benedict, Miranda and Ferdinand, Antony and Cleopatra, would have talked obscenely together, which is not the case (107). West's interpretation of Ophelia's character is not a consensus feeling among critics, so her innocence is challenged but not overturned. Beginning now with the play, the reader/viewer sees that the protagonist of the tragedy, Prince Hamlet, initially appears dressed in solemn black. He is mourning the death of his father, supposedly by snakebite, while he was away at Wittenberg as a student. Hamlet laments the hasty remarriage of his mother to his father's brother, an incestuous act; thus in his first soliloguy he cries out, "Frailty, thy name is woman!" Ophelia enters the play

with her brother Laertes, who, in parting for school, bids her farewell and gives her advice regarding her relationship with Hamlet. Op...... middle of paperSwisher. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1996. Reprint of Shakespeare's Women. N.p.: n.p., 1981.Shakespeare, William. The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. 1995.

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