

Revenge in Shakespeare's Hamlet

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Revenge in Shakespeare's Hamlet

In Hamlet, Shakespeare uses revenge as a major theme present throughout the work. Revenge plays a crucial role in the development of Fortinbras, Prince of Norway, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, and Laertes, son of Polonius. All three men seek revenge for the murder of their fathers. [Revenge](#) can be interpreted as a separate character in Hamlet. Revenge is set to overcome anyone who seeks it. Initially, after each of the murders, every son had a definite course of action to obtain vengeance. Or in Hamlet's case the choice was to seek no vengeance. As the play unfolds, each young man approaches the desire for revenge and chooses a different path towards gaining it based on the [guidance](#) of another character in the play. Fortinbras' good decisions and self-control, as well as, Hamlet and Laertes' bad decisions can be attributed to the outside guidance they receive.

Fortinbras, son of the slain King of [Norway](#), is the first to seek revenge. Although King Hamlet, the now deceased King of Denmark, held sole responsibility for the death of King Fortinbras, young Prince Fortinbras seeks vengeance toward the entire country of Denmark. Horatio, a friend of Hamlet's, said, "As it doth well appear unto our state, but to recover of us by strong hand and terms compulsory, those foresaid lands so by his

father lost?? (I.i.101-104). By this, Horatio is saying Fortinbras plans to forcefully regain the land King Hamlet took from King Fortinbras. Fortunately, King Claudius, the new King of Denmark, intervenes and sends two courtiers, Cornelius and Voltmand, to Norway in hopes of convincing the new King of Norway, Fortinbras' uncle, to prevent the attack. Upon hearing the message, Fortinbras' uncle vetoes Fortinbras' plan to wage war on Denmark. However, he encourages Fortinbras to employ his anger, against the Polack in order to vent his rage (II.ii.74-75). After taking the advice of his uncle, Fortinbras additionally makes vow before his uncle never more to have th' assay of arms against your majesty, (II.ii.70-71). This intervention could be what saves Fortinbras' life. With the counseling of his uncle, Fortinbras is able to put aside his longing to settle the score for his father's murder. In the end, he is greatly rewarded.

Because of his persistent doubt of whether Claudius did, in fact, kill his father Hamlet defers making pla...

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...events leading to the success of Fortinbras and the failure of Hamlet and Laertes was initiated by a command from someone close to them. King Claudius had an ulterior motive of saving his land, yet by telling Fortinbras' uncle of Fortinbras' plan to attack Denmark his uncle was able to deter his nephew's anger. By choosing not to attack Denmark Fortinbras was able to avoid harm's way. The ghost of Hamlet's father caused Hamlet's death by advising Hamlet to seek revenge. Before his encounter with his father Hamlet did not want any part in the act of revenge. In attempt to pursue his father's wishes Hamlet kills Polonius, which causes his death. When Laertes listens to King Claudius he brings death upon both of them. Laertes did not think his sword would be used against him. In the end, the men's fate was determined not only by their own feelings, but by the actions taken under the command of another person. For Hamlet and Laertes successful revenge led them to death. The guidance he received, as well as, inner strength surmounted Fortinbras' need for revenge and led him to happiness.

Works Cited:

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