

Hamlet Book Review
AP Literature and Composition Period 6
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You have convincingly analyzed all the elements of the play in completing this complex assignment. Lovely work! You incorporate EV and employ precise diction to enhance your analysis.

1. Hamlet's full title is *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. The play begins in chaos, with Denmark preparing for war in such frenzy that even the sanctified Sunday is "not [divided]....from the week" in their haste to prepare. By specifying "tragedy," Shakespeare makes it clear that said chaos will ultimately not be resolved by marriage, but by death—despite both the joviality of the newly-crowned King's introduction and the formal order of Scene Two that directly contrasts the hectic Scene One. The play eventually proves true to its title with Claudius' death, as his demise allows for order to be restored to the "rotten.....state of Denmark." Labeling Hamlet "Prince of Denmark" also introduces a sense of duty to his state and said demise of Claudius makes that sense of duty fitting: Hamlet is ultimately the one to save Denmark by exposing Claudius' corruption and enabling Fortinbras to rule after his death.

2. **Theme:** Through the retaliatory actions of *Hamlet's* characters, Shakespeare explores the motivations behind vengeance and expresses that seeking retribution ultimately leads to self-destruction.

Scene One: Laertes contrives the fencing scheme with Claudius in order to reap revenge for his sister Ophelia's death, an event which he blames on Hamlet. After Hamlet's second hit, Laertes admits in an aside that "[hitting Hamlet] now" and subsequently killing him with the poison on his sword is "almost against his conscience." However, he chooses to wound Hamlet anyway—beginning the scuffle that ends in his own injury and subsequent death.

Scene Two: Hamlet seeks vengeance on Claudius for the death of King Hamlet, a vengeance which drives the entirety of the play. Yet in seeking to kill the new king, Hamlet sacrifices his relationship with Ophelia through her being used to spy on him and his relationship with his mother for the majority of the play—as he views her sexual relations with Claudius as incestuous and disgraceful on her part. Ultimately, he loses his own life as the victim of Claudius' plot to kill him despite his own success in felling Claudius.

Theme: Through the machinations of *Hamlet's* characters, Shakespeare argues that man is inherently deceitful in regards to achieving his own ambitions.

Symbols: Espionage is a motif throughout *Hamlet*. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern tell Hamlet that they come to "visit [him]....no other occasion" when in truth Claudius bid them spy upon his nephew. Claudius and Polonius "closely [send] for Hamlet" so that he can "affront Ophelia," enable them to spy on the couple and judge whether Hamlet's madness stems from love.

Polonius hides in Gertrude's chambers to overhear the conversation between her and Hamlet.

Scene One: To rid himself of Hamlet, Claudius tells the prince that he is being sent to England for [his] especial safety—which we do tender." In truth, Claudius is intentionally sending Hamlet to his death in England by way of an order of execution carried by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet only escaped unscathed by orchestrating his own deception: forging another letter to England that called for the death of the two spies in his place.

Scene Two: Hamlet decides that "the play's the thing" to ascertain the King's guilt, as he doubts that his father's spirit is truly what it professes to be. To do so, he "entreats" Claudius to "hear and see" a play yet bids the players act a scene identical to Claudius' poisoning of King Hamlet.

clear connection to genre

effective on

excellent job on role of protagonist

strong theme! You focus on humor & nature & meaning.

You clearly succeed to relate scenes to theme.

vivid verbs

strong focus on literary device related to theme

Claudius, who believes that he is merely attending a play for amusement, is deeply disturbed by the work's likeness to his crime—so much so that he confesses his guilt in prayer.

3. Denmark's chaotic setting at *Hamlet's* scene one sets the mood for the work, one that reigns despite the contrasting order of Claudius' court in the second scene. The country's war preparations are so fervent that they "[do] not divide the Sunday from the week," and the appearance of King Hamlet's ghost seems to "bode some strange eruption" for the state. Said "strange eruption" is proved true in Act I Scene V, as the ghost becomes a visible symbol of the "[rotteness] in the state of Denmark" with the revelation of Claudius' corruption.

The societal setting also proves pertinent, as both the lack of appropriate grieving period for the fallen King and Claudius' admonishments about Hamlet's "obstinate condolence" in publically grieving anyway number among Hamlet's major grievances against his uncle and Gertrude. The absurdly and improperly short two-month space between King Hamlet's death and Claudius' marriage is referenced scornfully by Hamlet throughout the play with increasing hyperbole: at one point, he comments on "how cheerfully [his] mother looks, and [his] father died within's two hours." As Gertrude's marriage to King Hamlet made her kin to Claudius according to the belief of the time, her second marriage to Claudius is also viewed and disparaged by Hamlet as incestuous. With the improvement of his relationship with Gertrude, Hamlet's rage over Claudius' "[whoring his] mother" proves another motivation for wanting the man's murder.

Religious belief—specifically, belief in an afterlife—is a focus of Hamlet's ruminations on whether or not to commit suicide: in his "to be or not to be" soliloquy, he asserts that fear of what might happen "we have shuffled off this mortal coil" is what keeps men "[suffering] the slings and arrows" of life despite the agony of living. Said belief also influences Hamlet's decision not to kill a praying Claudius, as his fratricidal uncle's confession right before death would allow him into heaven while the victimized King Hamlet languished in hell.

4. *Hamlet* begins in chaos, with Denmark feverishly preparing for war and the appearance of King Hamlet's ghost "[boding] some strange eruption" for the nation. Claudius drinks and carouses while "something rotten" spreads through his kingdom. Gertrude remains ignorant of King Hamlet's murder and her relationship with her son is splintered: Hamlet scorns both her and his uncle for "[posting] with such dexterity to incestuous sheets." By the play's end, order has been restored: Claudius is dead, ending the rotting of Denmark and fulfilling King Hamlet's unfinished business in his wish for vengeance. In his place, Fortinbras has conquered the nation.

5. **Internal:** Hamlet's rage over Gertrude's rapid remarriage is an ongoing source of conflict for him, despite the ghost's warning not to "let [his] soul contrive against [his] mother" due to her ignorance of Claudius' deed. The lack of proper grieving period for King Hamlet is already a source of contention between himself and Claudius, who tells him that his continued woe is merely "impious stubbornness" and "unmanly grief." However, his anger at Gertrude runs deeper for her apparent betrayal of his father's love and is constantly reiterated throughout the play: that while the fallen king would "not beseem the winds of heaven visit [Gertrude's] face too roughly," the queen marries Claudius "within a month" and moves with such dexterity to incestuous sheets. His bitter declaration that "frailty, thy name is woman" is an attitude that persists in him until his confrontation with Gertrude in her chamber.

Explain more. Does this confrontation resolve his conflict?

You clearly discuss three different elements of setting and their importance

* Ques for support

Clear statement with strong EV!

* Ques

external

External: Hamlet's task of killing Claudius is the central conflict of the entire play, affecting all around him whether directly or indirectly. By nature, Hamlet is a thinker; while most others would immediately believe a message from an otherworldly spectre, Hamlet seeks proof for himself and buys time to obtain it by feigning insanity. He harshly deprecates himself for the subsequent delay in wreaking vengeance—declaring that he is “pigeon-livered and [lacks] gall” for failing to “[fat] all the region kites with [Claudius’] offal.” His insanity ploy also ultimately destroys his relationship with Ophelia, as Hamlet is forced to continue his act for the spying eyes of the king and Polonius; Ophelia fails to understand the true meaning of Hamlet’s letter and believes his madness to be truth, eventually going insane herself and committing suicide. Gertrude’s relationship with her son is damaged by her rapid marriage to the man who killed her first husband until Hamlet reveals to her in her chamber that he is “not in madness, but mad in craft.” Claudius is greatly alarmed by Hamlet’s act, claiming that “madness in great ones must not unwatch’d go” and resolving to kill Hamlet after the slaying of Polonius. His plotting directly leads to the deaths of Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Gertrude, and Laertes—and indirectly to Hamlet’s and his own.

* Qu for support

BMS about the force that opposes Hamlet externally.

6. Zeniths and Nadirs

- That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound
 In filial obligation for some term
 To do obsequious sorrow. But to persever
 In obstinate condolement is a course
 Of impious stubbornness. 'Tis unmanly grief.
 It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
 A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
 An understanding simple and unschooled.
 For what we know must be and is as common
 As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
 Why should we in our peevish opposition
 Take it to heart? Fie! 'Tis a fault to heaven,
 A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
 To reason most absurd.....
 We pray you, throw to earth
 This unprevailing woe, and think of us
 As of a father. (i.ii.91-109)

The coronation of Claudius and the circumstances surrounding it—namely, the lack of proper grieving period for King Hamlet and the incestuous marriage between Claudius and Gertrude—incite Hamlet’s anger at his uncle even before he is aware of the ghost’s unrest. That Hamlet is scolded for following proper mourning rites is nothing short of an outrage for him, and one he cannot openly declare in the coronation’s public setting. King Hamlet’s declaration of his murderer merely ignites the already simmering resentment in Hamlet that stems from Claudius’ words and deeds—solidifying his resolve to kill his uncle.

- If thou didst ever thy dear father love--Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder. (i.v)
 While Hamlet is already angry at Claudius for the lack of respect shown to his father and for marrying his mother only two months after King Hamlet’s death (or indeed, marrying her at all),

Explain
each plot
element
negatively or
positively
affect plot
and character



the spectre's bidding for revenge is what gives him reason to ultimately act on those feelings. Indeed, the ghost's desire to reap vengeance on Claudius and Hamlet's attempts to do his bidding forms the central conflict of the play.

- May be the devil, and the devil hath power
T' assume a pleasing shape. Yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
More relative than this. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king. (ii.ii)

While most people would immediately believe the words of an apparition like King Hamlet, Hamlet's skepticism over Claudius' guilt is what keeps him procrastinating in his task prior to this point—and cursing himself as “pigeon-livered” for doing so. The appearance of the players in Elsinore allow him to formulate a plan to ascertain the king's guilt: to stage a play reenacting his uncle's murder of his father and watch Claudius for any sort of reaction to it. Ultimately, the ploy works: Hamlet's play causes the king to violently react and confirms his guilt in murdering his brother, and Hamlet's discussion with his mother in the aftermath of the play allows for the repairing of the relationship between them. Subsequently, Gertrude ^{DI} covers for Hamlet by telling Claudius that he truly is mad—despite his confession to her that he is only “mad in craft.”

Is this a positive environment for Hamlet?

- And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy. Oh, woe is me,
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see! (iii.i)

Unfortunately, Ophelia fails to understand the “Doubt thou the stars are fire....” note that Hamlet sends to her—covertly telling her that he truly does love her and that his declarations otherwise are an act. Subsequently, she falls for his ploy of madness and his assertions that “[He] loved [her] not” and is driven insane as a result of both her seeming rejection and the later death of her father. Her insanity deeply horrifies and angers her brother Laertes upon his return from France, making him susceptible to Claudius' implications that her condition is Hamlet's fault and his manipulations in getting him to kill Hamlet—which ultimately leads to the deaths of both Hamlet and Laertes himself.

Clear EX of outcome in plot

- Oh, my offence is rank. It smells to heaven.
It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,
A brother's murder. Pray can I not.
Though inclination be as sharp as will,
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursèd hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood?

What does this reveal about her character?

Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
 But to confront the visage of offence?
 And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
 To be forestallèd ere we come to fall
 Or pardoned being down? Then I'll look up.
 My fault is past. But oh, what form of prayer
 Can serve my turn, "Forgive me my foul murder"? (iii.iii)

make sure to use precise literary terms.

soliloquy

Though the king's reaction to play confirms his guilt, Claudius' monologue is the first time in the play that assurance of his deed comes directly stated from his own mouth. However, Hamlet refrains from killing him on the grounds that murder during prayer would ensure Claudius' soul to heaven—a final fate distinctly unsatisfactory, as the noble King Hamlet languishes in hell simply because Claudius killed him before he could repent his sins. The plethora of deaths at the play's end, therefore, happen because of Hamlet's choice not to seize this opportunity.

- In heaven. Send hither to see. If your messenger find him not there, seek him i' th' other place yourself. But if indeed you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby. (iv.iii)

Hamlet's murder of Polonius is the climax of the play, setting the final events in motion: said murder is Claudius' motivation for seeking to kill him in earnest, with the journey to England being his first attempt. Hamlet's deception and escape from his uncle's trap leads to the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. His seeming lack of punishment for killing Polonius enrages Laertes and drives him to murder the killer of his father—making him susceptible to Claudius' final plot.

- And yet it is almost 'gainst my conscience. (v.ii)

Laertes' moment of doubt is the play's final moment in which reversing the current course of events is possible. However, said opportunity is ultimately refused—culminating in the play's tragic end. As Laertes fails to follow his conscience, he strikes Hamlet with the poisoned blade, ultimately killing both Hamlet and himself.

But, Hamlet and Laertes exchange forgiveness, which leads to resolution & restoration of order.

7. Hamlet is a tragedy, as stated in the full title of *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*.

Though the seemingly pleasant coronation of Act I, Scene II and the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia initially give the appearance of cheer, ominous lines such as "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" and the revelation of Claudius' treachery reinforce that Hamlet's mission for vengeance will not end well.

preceptive idea!
 Tragedy results in the fall of a noble character as a result of his own flaw.
 what is Hamlet's central flaw?

Hamlet	Claudius	Gertrude	Ophelia	Horatio
cerebral embittered	duplicitous pernicious	angst-ridden intrepid	affable benign	pragmatic deferential
round	round	dynamic	dynamic	flat
protagonist	antagonist	protagonist	protagonist	confidant

Can a play have multiple protagonists?

You reveal his complexity

Hamlet: Prince Hamlet is the play's protagonist, yet no one concrete description can be given him—as he demonstrates an array of varying personality traits as the play progresses. A thinker by nature, he prefers to obtain proof and to ruminate over his actions before acting—shown in his conviction to reenact Claudius' murder of his brother and ascertain his guilt instead of simply taking the ghost's word as truth. Hamlet is also quite self-deprecating, making the occasional detrimental remark about himself—"My father's brother, but no more like my father than I to Hercules" is one notable example—and berating himself harshly for the delay in murdering Claudius. He also appears to be somewhat depressed, as he contemplates suicide in his famous "to be or not to be" soliloquy. Though Hamlet feigns insanity to gain time with which to ascertain Claudius' guilt in killing his father, it is arguable whether his uncertainty and anger over the circumstances surrounding his imminent task arguably drives him to a measure of actual insanity.

Examples:

But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
O vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
A scullion! Fie upon 't, foh! (ii.ii)

How stand I then,
That have a father killed, a mother stained,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep—while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That for a fantasy and trick of fame
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? Oh, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth! (iv.iv)

Claudius: Claudius is the play's antagonist, setting its events in motion by murdering his brother King Hamlet and marrying the Queen Gertrude. For the vast majority of the play, he appears to show little remorse for any of his actions—berating Hamlet publically for observing proper grieving rites for his slain father and ordering Hamlet's death in England without hesitation after Polonius' murder. However, his confession—overheard by Hamlet—gives deeper insight into his character, as he admits to the sin of his actions and questions whether he can truly be forgiven.

Examples:

It shall be so.

* detail for support of idea

You have chosen effective
Q&As to illustrate central
ideas about each character.

Madness in great ones must not unwatched go. (iii.i)

Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
To be forestallèd ere we come to fall
Or pardoned being down? Then I'll look up.
My fault is past. But oh, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn, "Forgive me my foul murder"? (iii.iii)

Gertrude: From Hamlet's initially irate perspective in the play, Gertrude is presented as a flighty and disloyal character—to incestuously marry Claudius not two months after King Hamlet's death. Beginning with his declaration that "frailty, thy name is woman," Gertrude's marriage is a repeated source of contention for Hamlet—one that he brings up repeatedly. "Look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father's died within two hours" is his most bitterly hyperbolic reiteration of Gertrude's supposed betrayal. Not until mother and son's conversation in her chamber does her true character begin to emerge: as a person able to assert herself. She lies without remorse about Hamlet's madness to Claudius, covering for her son and allowing his plans to continue. Ultimately, however, she chooses the wrong moment to defy Claudius' wishes and falls into the poison trap meant for Hamlet, dying.

Mad as the sea and wind when both contend
Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips out his rapier, cries, "A rat, a rat!"
And in this brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man. (iv.i)

I will, my lord. I pray you, pardon me. (v.ii)

Ophelia: Ophelia is daughter to Polonius, sister to Laertes, and girlfriend to Hamlet. In Hamlet's quest to avenge his father, however, her relationship with him is destroyed with Polonius' and Claudius' decision to spy on the couple. In failing to understand the meaning of his "Doubt thou the stars are fire...." note, she does not understand that his declarations of not loving her are part of his madness act. Hamlet's rejection of her coupled with his accidental murder of her father eventually drives her insane; her madness so enrages her brother that he swears vengeance on the person responsible and places the blame on Hamlet—with some prodding from Claudius.

Examples:

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy. Oh, woe is me,
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see! (iii.i)

Ex? What has
she appeared to be
before this moment?

There's fennel for you, and columbines.—There's rue for you, and here's some for me. We may call it "herb of grace" o' Sundays.—Oh, you must wear your rue with a difference.—There's a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died. They say he made a good end. *For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy—* (iv.v)

Horatio: Horatio is Hamlet's confidant and the character who comes the closest to understanding Hamlet's psyche. He is extremely loyal—even to the point of declaring himself an "antique Roman" and being willing to commit suicide in order to follow Hamlet. Horatio is the last character left standing after the play's tragic end, and he fulfils Hamlet's dying wish by relating Hamlet's story to Fortinbras and the world.

Examples:

Never believe it.

I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.

Here's yet some liquor left. (v.ii)

Not from his mouth,
Had it th' ability of life to thank you.
He never gave commandment for their death.
But since so jump upon this bloody question,
You from the Polack wars, and you from England,
Are here arrived, give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placèd to the view,
And let me speak to th' yet-unknowing world
How these things came about. So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on th' inventors' heads. All this can I
Truly deliver. (v.ii)

9. Stylistic Elements

Hamlet:

Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See, what a grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man:
This was your husband. (iii.iv.53-63)

Shakespeare's mythological allusions evoke powerful images while simultaneously avoiding wordiness and emphasizing meaning. Simply by alluding to several powerful figures, Shakespeare paints an impressive image of the late King Hamlet: a light and pure being of stately grace, venerable and mighty, worthy of command, blessed by the gods themselves. Against this esteemed figure, Gertrude's successive marriage to the "mildew'd ear" of Claudius is subsequently viewed that much more strongly as the severe downgrade and betrayal that Hamlet vehemently asserts it to be.

Queen: Hamlet, thou has thy father much offended.

Hamlet: Mother, you have my father much offended. (iii.iv.9-10)

Shakespeare's propensity for wordplay is such that he can completely alter the meaning of a sentence and all said sentence's implications by the simple change of two words. In terms of language, Hamlet and Gertrude make virtually the same statement; however, Gertrude refers to the play which reenacted the murder of King Hamlet and highly disturbed Claudius. With her marriage to the new king, Hamlet is his step-son as well as his nephew; the title of "thy father" therefore seems fitting to her for use. However, by changing "thou has thy" to "you have my," Hamlet reiterates the bitter grievance towards Gertrude that has angered him for the play's entirety: that she has gravely offended and betrayed the man who Hamlet truly sees as his father by marrying Claudius at all—let alone barely two months after King Hamlet's death.

10. Prompts

1997: Novels and plays often include scenes of weddings, funerals, parties, and other social occasions. Such scenes may reveal the values of the characters and the society in which they live. Select a novel or play that includes such a scene and, in a focused essay, discuss the contribution the scene makes to the meaning of the work as whole. You may choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of literary merit.

Thesis: The coronation scene for the new King Claudius introduces the corruption and disquiet that has invaded Denmark since King Hamlet's death.

Topic I: Denmark's "rotting" societal climate is introduced through the incestuous marriage of Gertrude and Claudius as well as the truncated grieving period for King Hamlet.

- Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we—as 'twere with a defeated joy,
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole—
Taken to wife. (i.ii.8-14)
- That it should come to this!
But two months dead!—nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly....and yet, within a month,—
Let me not think on't,—Frailty, thy name is woman!—

You identify and explain crucial aspects of Shakespeare's style.

excellent choice & prompt!

revising what? BUS in TH.

A little month....married with mine uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules: within a month;
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married:— O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets! (i.ii.137-157)

Topic II: The grievances of Hamlet that are introduced during this scene later fuel his motivation to murder the new king.

- O God, your only jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within's two hours. (iii.ii.124-125)
- Does it not, think thee, stand me now upon—
He that hath killed my king and whored my mother,
Popped in between th' election and my hopes,
Thrown out his angle for my proper life
(And with such cozenage!)—is 't not perfect conscience
To quit him with this arm? And is 't not to be damned
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil? (v.ii.68-77)

Ending: That even an imperial and joyful coronation could be wrought with such corrupt undertones suggests the overwhelming strength of Denmark's "rotting."

1983: Select a line or so of poetry, or a moment or scene in a novel, epic poem, or play that you find especially memorable. Write an essay in which you identify the line or the passage, explain its relationship to the work in which it is found, and analyze the reasons for its effectiveness.

Thesis: Hamlet's "to be, or not to be" speech embodies several themes of the play—including the connection between thought and action and the difficulty of knowing truth.

Topic I: Though the soliloquy discusses death and suicide, uncertainty and the impossibility of knowing the future after taking a particular action echoes Hamlet's difficulties with attempting to kill his uncle.

- To be, or not to be? That is the question—
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them? (iii.i.57-60)
- For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life. (iii.i.67-70)

Topic II: The effectiveness of this soliloquy stems from its insight into Hamlet's character: his intellect and philosophical nature both work hard to find a solution to killing Claudius—suicide being a possible option—yet his inability to easily solve the problem and subsequent procrastination frustrate him.

- But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourne

shows well that illustrates plot and character.

Relevant to theme in your concluding statement

Strong focus on meaning to write essay



No traveler returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of? (iii.ii.80-84)

- Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action. (iii.ii.85-90)

Ending: Herein lies the reason for the soliloquy's fame: that it simultaneously reveals a character's depth while reiterating the themes of the book and pondering the timeless question of life after death.

relation to other aspects of the play?
statement of human nature?