

How does Shakespeare reveal Hamlet's state of mind, character and problems to the audience, with particular reference to the soliloquies we have studied?

You have a lot of useful information that you can include in your essay. Use the following to help guide you through the points you should make. You don't have to use this structure and you definitely don't have to put your points in this order (apart from the introduction and the conclusion):

Introduction: Give an overview of the play and Hamlet's character, state of mind and problems. You might start with something like, 'Throughout the play *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare the protagonist, Hamlet, seems ...'

Main body of essay: Consider whether *Hamlet* fits into the revenge tragedy genre and whether or not Hamlet himself is a tragic hero.

Main body of essay: Explore Act 1 Scene 2 when we first meet Hamlet and what he is like at this point in the play. You might want to include some information about Claudius and Gertrude here and their reaction to Hamlet. Look in particular at Hamlet's soliloquy.

Main body of essay: Explore a number of soliloquies in the play in which Hamlet seems to you to be exactly the same or has changed – you might pick out the way his anger seems to subside; his increasing obsession with not seeking revenge; his apparent procrastination; his questioning of the after-life and the uncertainty of death.

Main body of essay: Look at Hamlet's conversations with others in the play. What does this suggest about his apparent madness? Does he appear rational; cruel; emotionless?

Main body of essay: Explore Hamlet's thoughts about death and the after life but his lack of care about his killing of Polonius and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Main body of essay: Discuss the ending of the play and what this tells us about Hamlet's character and state of mind.

Main body of essay: Does Shakespeare's use of blank verse and prose affect our understanding of Hamlet's state of mind and character? Look to see if Hamlet uses prose at all and if not, why not?

Conclusion: Summarise what you have written in the essay and briefly explain how you have answered the question. You might want to start with something like, 'Despite Hamlet's pretence of madness it is quite clear to audiences that ...' or 'Although Hamlet feigns madness ...'

Remember:

You are writing about a play so always refer to the audience.

Hamlet is a work of fiction so you need to consider Shakespeare and the writer's craft at all times.

Throughout your essay you should explore how language and imagery help us to understand Hamlet's state of mind and character.

Use quotations to prove you are right.

At the opening of the play Hamlet seems ...

Shakespeare reveals Hamlet's distressed state of mind ...

An audience might feel that ...

Alternatively ...

Although Hamlet might be considered by some ...

Hamlet possibly hesitates because ...

When Hamlet refers to life as ...

The audience understands ...

Shakespeare reveals the depth of love Hamlet had for his father by ...

Hamlet's deep hatred of Claudius is shown when ... and his repeated use of such words as ...

Even at moments in the play which seem humorous, Hamlet's weary cynicism reveals his deep unhappiness ...

Hamlet often questions himself about ...

The images of Illustrate Hamlet's disgust ...

Hamlet is often considered to be a complex character because ...

expressed	presents	discontented	troubled	
status	contrast	comparison	depressed	
procrastinates	hesitates	understands	recognises	
disgust	questions	ponders	philosophises	beliefs
attitudes	action	motivation	religion	