

Thesis	My comments
<p>The thesis is too vague. It doesn't identify a specific conflict or problem, and it doesn't make a generalization about that problem that can be argued. The thesis does not explain how imagery and rhetoric will be used to support the thesis.</p>	
<p>Hamlet's conflict, that he deals with from the start of the play, is more internal than external conflict.</p>	<p>The first thing you'd want to do is explain what that inner conflict is (narrowly). Is he struggling to believe his own senses? Is he questioning his religion? Is he struggling to feel grief? Is he feeling betrayed by his friends and family? Is he struggling to remember his father? Is he wondering why he should be destined to commit a medieval act in a modern world? Try to avoid "struggling to decide," as that's an old-fashioned way of viewing <i>Hamlet</i> that oversimplifies the problem.</p>
<p>The character of Hamlet represents the individual and works as an individual throughout the play. There are many different groups that work against Hamlet and that he works against as well. This is a conflict in many different ways as it provided a rift between Hamlet as the main character and almost every other person in the play.</p>	<p>Then, let's say you pick "struggling to feel grief." What could you argue about that that is pertinent but isn't a fact? Here's one example: "Hamlet is struggling to grieve for his lost father in a world that has already moved on. Shakespeare argues that by forbidding Hamlet to feel grief and loss, his family has filled him with a destructive rage that will destroy them all."</p>
<p>Shakespeare heightened the conflict in <i>Hamlet</i> by making it hard for Hamlet to speak up for his dead father. Shakespeare furthers this internal conflict by comparing Hamlet to Laertes, who did not have a problem speaking up for his father, by letting the audience view Hamlet's uncertainty about avenging his father's death, and by showing King Hamlet continuously reminding Hamlet to avenge him.</p>	<p>Don't forget to identify which types of imagery and rhetoric you will use to support your thesis. Do not use plot points to support your thesis.</p>
<p>I don't think this was necessarily a theme Shakespeare was trying to make a statement on, it might have just been for the plot. However, just as with the last work we read, the protagonist definitely doesn't have to be a "good guy." Hamlet doesn't strike me as a "hero," so I can't make the claim that Shakespeare thinks Hamlet was in the right for wanting to kill his stepfather. In fact, I think the opposite is true.</p>	<p>You didn't articulate a thesis yet, but I thought we could brainstorm about how to make this into a thesis. Why do you think Hamlet isn't a "good guy" and what would Shakespeare have intended by that? I can imagine a lot of directions to go. For example, let's say you chose a thesis like this:</p> <p>"In <i>Hamlet</i>, Shakespeare creates an "antihero" who wants to kill his uncle and who needs to believe he is justified. He blames everyone for his predicament, from his uncle's courtiers to his own friends. Shakespeare uses imagery associated with disease and rhetorical questions to show how Hamlet comes to view his uncle as a cancer on society that must be cured."</p> <p>This thesis contains an argument that could be supported by language (not plot). I'm not suggesting you use it; I'm just helping you imagine the steps that might take you from what you wrote to an argument you could explore in this paper.</p>
<p>To be able to define what Hegel meant by Shakespeare's <i>Hamlet</i> being a self vs society situation, one must consider Hamlet's use of words to exemplify what it is to be in the throes of an existential situation during Shakespeare's time.</p>	<p>You're still talking quite generally about the conflict self-vs-society, and of course existential situation could mean anything. What would you say is the nature of Hamlet's conflict with society? Is he affirming the rightness of one religion over another (Catholics believe in ghosts and purgatory; Protestants do not)? Is he struggling the idea that he was put in the world for a specific purpose, one which he rejects or is unsuited for? Is he making a political argument about the impossibility of justice in a political system based on absolute power? Is he struggling with the conventional nature of all the options open to him (Polonius's sanctimony, Old Hamlet's eye for an eye, Claudius's craven lust-and-power-driven nature)? Try to articulate that first. Then try to tell us what exactly Shakespeare is saying about it. (continued)</p>

	<p>Here's an example: "At the moment when England welcomed a new, absolutist monarch (James had published a treatise on absolute power), Shakespeare asks the audience to consider whether true justice in such a system is ever possible. He uses imagery associated with madness and parenthetical statements to show the mental strategies individuals must go to to evade detection in state powered by espionage and surveillance."</p> <p>Don't forget to use imagery and rhetoric (not plot) to support your argument.</p>
<p>The paper identifies a thesis and a way of exploring it through imagery and rhetoric, but the thesis could be articulated more clearly.</p>	
<p>Shakespeare uses Hamlet and the residents inside of the castle to explore the counterparts each person holds in situations such as the conflict between son and mother, or a son and his feelings towards others. Hamlet's conflict is not with the ghost of his father, it's with himself and Shakespeare shows his audience the inner turmoil of Hamlet's mind and state through side conversations and soliloquy.</p>	<p>The second part of your thesis is that Hamlet's conflict is with himself; that's much more productive than the first half (plus I don't understand the first part completely yet). But what exactly would you say the nature of that conflict is? It's still vague.</p> <p>The first thing you'd want to do is explain what that inner conflict is (narrowly). Is he struggling to believe his own senses? Is he questioning his religion? Is he struggling to feel grief? Is he feeling betrayed by his friends and family? Is he struggling to remember his father? Is he wondering why he should be destined to commit a medieval act in a modern world? Try to avoid "struggling to decide," as that's an old-fashioned way of viewing Hamlet that oversimplifies the problem.</p> <p>Then, let's say you pick "struggling to feel grief." What could you argue about that that is pertinent but isn't a fact? Here's one example: "Hamlet is struggling to grieve for his lost father in a world that has already moved on. Shakespeare argues that by forbidding Hamlet to feel grief and loss, his family has filled him with a destructive rage that will destroy them all."</p> <p>I love what you say about the side conversations and the soliloquy form. I think you might end up talking about the essay form of Montaigne, which uses similar strategies in what were revolutionary ways.</p>
<p>You have a thesis and a list of possible support, but the two seem unconnected.</p>	
<p>To demonstrate Hamlet's mental state during the play, Shakespeare uses various puns and paradoxes in Hamlet's speeches, which in turn show the reader that Hamlet likes to use wordplay to insult, explain, mock, and so forth, showing his true sanity, or lack thereof. These different manipulations of puns and paradoxes Hamlet uses help capture the general tale Shakespeare was trying so desperately to write. <i>Hamlet</i> is a story depicting the morality that revenge is not necessarily the answer for injustice; it usually only creates a stage for more injustices to happen to the person(s) who is pursuing the vengeance.</p>	<p>Your list of possible support (puns, wordplay, paradoxes) is linked to Hamlet's sanity, but the thesis you list is about the morality of revenge—which is less a conflict internal to Hamlet and more a social idea (that's okay, of course). But I don't see a link between Hamlet's sanity or lack thereof (which is it?) and revenge.</p> <p>I just read your imagery analysis, so I was wondering if you would consider thinking about how <i>Hamlet</i> uses imagery of the senses and wordplay such as parenthesis and hendiadys (nearly synonymous pairs like "slings and arrows") to question the value of empirical knowledge. Hamlet's faith tells him the ghost is not real, but his senses tell him the ghost is real. That pits two modern ways of knowing (Protestantism vs science) against each other in an unresolvable way.</p>

You identify a conflict or problem, but still need to turn it into a thesis with a “why” or reason associated with it.	
<p>Shakespeare uses the imagery of disease in <i>Hamlet</i> to show the deterioration of the world he knows. Hamlet's views on good and evil cause him to gain a more evil perception of the world as the play goes on, the imagery of disease increasing.</p>	<p>This is almost a thesis, but it lacks a “why.” Why does Shakespeare show Hamlet’s world deteriorating? Does that reflect his inner emotional deterioration or his ability to trust the people he loves? Does it suggest that revenge poisons what it touches? Does it reflect Hamlet’s inability to believe in the reality of an exterior world, or his inability to decide between what his faith tells him and what his senses tell him? Or does it say something about the world itself—its moral relativism, its political corruption, its banality? Try to turn this into an argument: For example: In <i>Hamlet</i>, Shakespeare’s imagery of disease mirrors the deterioration of Hamlet’s ability to trust his own senses.</p> <p>Don’t forget to also use rhetoric as support for your thesis.</p>
<p>In <i>Hamlet</i>, Shakespeare uses the imagery of death and disease to represent the political corruption occurring in the kingdom.</p>	<p>Again, why. Is Shakespeare arguing that women were unjustly held to a different standard—and, if so, how does that affect the outcome of the play? The play explores a few of these ideas. Ophelia is held to a different sexual standard than Hamlet—because of his rank—and than Laertes, because of his gender. But how does this impact the play?</p> <p>One way to think about it is to think about the tendency to idealize female virtue. This causes Hamlet to feel rage against his mother for her “whoredom”—note his preoccupation with the fluids in Claudius’s “enseamed” bed—and against Ophelia by extension. It also causes the women to be victimized by their belief that they are both virgins and whores. So, here’s two opposing arguments based on these conclusions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In <i>Hamlet</i>, Shakespeare calls attention to the double standard by which women are judged to show how Hamlet is motivated by a sense of betrayal and disgust that destroys him. OR 2. Shakespeare shows how the impossible double standard by which women are judged makes them the true victims of the play, resulting in their desperate desire to repurify themselves (Hecuba by weeping, Gertrude by drinking, Ophelia by drowning and dissolving as Hamlet wishes he could do). <p>Obviously, you could go many ways with this idea; I’m trying to help you visualize examples.</p> <p>As you mention in your thesis, be sure to include support in the form of metaphor (fluids, sluttiness, etc.) and rhetoric (for example, rhetorical questions—“why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?”)</p>
<p>In the play <i>Hamlet</i>, the use of language towards women portrays a double standard where women were held to higher social standards and expectations.</p>	<p>The only thing you might add here is a “why.” Why would Shakespeare want us to question the value of revenge? Is it because it is wasteful? Is it because it denies the possibility of mercy? Is it because it causes an endless cycle of sin by mirroring the avenger in more sinful behavior? Is it because it replaces natural grieving with violence? He had certainly written about revenge in early tragedies like <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, so that helps us put things in context.</p>
<p>Shakespeare uses the imagery of disease and the trope of hendiadys to suggest that revenge is deadly and infectious. He uses hendiadys to symbolize people's sins coming back to burn them, in the same way Hamlet feels when committing a sin</p>	<p>The only thing you might add here is a “why.” Why would Shakespeare want us to question the value of revenge? Is it because it is wasteful? Is it because it denies the possibility of mercy? Is it because it causes an endless cycle of sin by mirroring the avenger in more sinful behavior? Is it because it replaces natural grieving with violence? He had certainly written about revenge in early tragedies like <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, so that helps us put things in context.</p>

<p>Shakespeare's protagonist Hamlet creates a unique plot to get revenge for his father's murder and as he pushes forward in his mission, he blurs the line of sanity, thus creating a parallel to the state of purgatory.</p>	<p>The possible argument I see here is that Shakespeare argues that purgatory is a mental or emotional state rather than a physical location—so if Hamlet's father is in purgatory, he's actually inhabiting his own mind and keeping him from moving on. That's extremely interesting, and it would help explain the problem of purgatory being a discredited medieval idea, at least according to the politics of Shakespeare's time.</p> <p>Make sure you don't use plot to support your thesis, instead concentrating on rhetoric and wordplay. For example, you could use imagery associated with memory, darkness, fire and burning, cosmic imagery, angels and demons—obviously you'd want to narrow that. What about rhetoric? Since what you're describing is a problem of memory and obsession, you could talk about circular language (chiasmus), interrupted lines of speech (parenthesis), and perhaps hendiadys (weighing of things that are more similar than different).</p>
<p>I have decided to go in depth about the topic of insanity. This topic mainly affected <i>Hamlet</i> and was just seen as insanity. In our society today, insanity often appears to correlate with a mental illness, something that people in Shakespeare's time might not have known about and just assumed they were crazy, when there could have been an underlying mental illness.</p>	<p>To me, insanity and mental illness are basically synonyms. I think what you may be saying that you'd like to apply a modern clinical diagnosis to Hamlet's insanity. You could say that Hamlet suffered from deferred grief, from an Oedipal complex (but please don't, because it's been overdone), from cognitive dissonance an inability to reconcile his beliefs from the evidence of his senses, from narcissism, from depression (which is what people thought in Shakespeare's time, only they called it an imbalance of humors like melancholy), from gender dysphoria, or more. But you'd still need to say why. For example, imagine this thesis:</p> <p>Shakespeare's Hamlet suffers from what we would, today, call narcissism. Shakespeare portrays Hamlet in this way, minus the clinical diagnosis, to show that Hamlet and his fellow aristocrats were too preoccupied with their own disfunction to take care of the country.</p> <p>That is not necessarily your argument; I'm just trying to get you to think about your idea in terms of stating an argument.</p> <p>What support would you use? You could talk about imagery associated with "brain" (a popular word in this play) and disease. He even talks to his brain: "About, my brain." You could talk about rhetorical tropes like soliloquy to show his obsession with his own feelings. Try NOT to support your argument with events from the plot.</p>
<p>Your thesis is more of a fact or is readily apparent. Your thesis needs support in the form of imagery and rhetoric, not plot.</p>	
<p>Hamlet's descent into madness was a descent into deep depression because of his father's death. Him trying to push Ophelia, and everyone else, away is also a result of his depression and pretending to be insane.</p>	<p>This is not really an argument, since Hamlet's melancholy at his father's death is one of the oldest ways of approaching the play. Hamlet announces his sadness almost immediately. In the same way, the idea that Hamlet is mad is questionable, but it has certainly been argued.</p> <p>Instead, try to express the problem more narrowly. Is Hamlet distraught because of deferred grief? Is he distraught because the ghost tells him everything he learned in school is wrong? Is he distraught because he feels inadequate to mourn his father sufficiently, like the Hecuba player? Does he feel betrayed by his friends? Does he feel all the possibility of human existence narrowed into a stupid medieval practice that will make all his potential irrelevant? Is he struggling to remember his father and confronting the fact that everything dies, even memory?</p> <p>Try to use a more narrow idea to generate your thesis. Then, make sure to find imagery and rhetoric (not plot) to use as support.</p>

Your thesis isn't really making a single generalization about the problem but instead trying to prove several apparently unconnected ideas that are not yet articulated as arguments.

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare imbued witch-speak into the speech and actions of Ophelia and Queen Gertrude to demonstrate the influence of a woman's despair, the power dynamics between aristocrats, and the cursed downfall of others—or themselves.

I am intrigued by "witch speak" in Ophelia and Gertrude—I am thinking it's the kind of speech we talked about in Richard III. But I don't understand what you're planning to say about all these things—and I think you should stick to one. For example, what if you talked about the first one, women's despair. What are you saying about it that helps us understand Hamlet? I can image a couple of ways of thinking about it:

1. Shakespeare uses the heightened language of Ophelia, Gertrude, [and Hecuba?] to show that women's ability to feel grief makes Hamlet feel inadequate and helpless, causing him to want to destroy them.
2. Shakespeare associates "witch-speak" or heightened grief language with women to show that Hamlet's fear of being "unmanly" keeps him from coming to grips with his grief.
3. Shakespeare uses "witch speak" or female magical language to distinguish tragic heroes of the past, who were usually grieving women, from modern tragic heroes, who are men struggling with problems of knowledge. Etc.

I mention Hecuba since the player also endows her with "witch speak" or heightened language. You could talk about how female language allows them to magically dissolve in grief, while Hamlet, the intellectual, fails to.

Don't forget to define "witch speak"—is it just heightened language or does it also include song and lamentation (as in Gertrude's There is a willow speech).

You have articulated a thesis, but your support doesn't include imagery and wordplay.

I am going to be talking about the perception of Hamlet as being "mad" and about how people process their grief. Hamlet was experiencing this grief and possibly depression, but the characters see his processing as madness imply because the time period does not allow a safe space for mental health in the way that our society does now.

Intro, thesis-What are the stages of grief, Hamlet in the stages

- Hamlet as depressed?
- The characters view of Hamlet, characters understanding of grief, how other characters experience grief
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At a later stage of this paper, you can include psychological theories about the stages of grief and deferred grief. This is a good thesis. But this paper must be supported primarily with imagery and rhetoric. What kinds of support could you use? Examples of imagery: disease, senses (or just one sense), memory, angelic imagery, music, etc. Examples of rhetoric: Either /or language [antithesis, hendiadys], circular language [chiasmus], interrupted thought process [parenthesis], etc.

Later in the paper, you can also talk about early modern language about grief and feeling, as well as modern ideas. For example, lots of scholars these days are looking at Thomas Wright's *Passions of the Mind*, which is a treatise on feeling and how it depends on senses:

https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/doc/WrightPassions_M/index.html [excerpt here].

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare suggests that the debate over what the afterlife entails is futile. He does this to provide commentary on the religious institutions of his time and to suggest the futility of their conflict.

This is an interesting thesis, especially since Shakespeare was likely to have been a Catholic recusant in a Protestant society. I would ask you to take it a bit further. Why are debates about the afterlife futile? Perhaps because there is no way to verify their claims, but perhaps also because both are incompatible with science and the evidence of the senses. Or perhaps because they spoil our current existence, which might be the only one we have.

Consider how you might support such an argument using imagery and rhetoric. You might consider sense-based imagery (sight or sound), or the play's many rhetorical questions that cannot be answered.

<p>You articulate a thesis and a pattern of imagery as support. Could you take your thesis even further by internalizing it or applying it to Shakespeare's world more generally?</p>	
<p>Within <i>Hamlet</i>, Shakespeare uses constant patterns of disease imagery throughout the play. He does this as a means of reflecting the sinfulness of man that pervades nobility. What once was something so healthy and pure in the eyes of Hamlet, soon fell to sickness and corruption at the hands of Claudius.</p>	<p>You're using imagery to show that Claudius—a noble—is increasingly corrupt. That is a good place to start. The play makes clear that Claudius feels guilt and so doesn't believe he can be cleared of his sin (he compares himself to an animal caught in a sticky trap or quick lime). But that is already made clear in the play. I'm suggesting you find a way to take it farther.</p> <p>Could you take this further and suggest that the reason Hamlet doesn't want to kill father number 2 (Claudius) is his similarity—rather than his difference—from father number one? Or could you argue that Hamlet is trying to extinguish sin from the world by killing his uncle? Or could you extend this to an argument about monarchy and the inability to hold it accountable? That would make this play a sort of political comment on either Queen Elizabeth or King James, depending on when it was written. King James, for example, argued that kings could not be held accountable because they held their power from God. So, if Shakespeare is attacking that idea, it's radical indeed.</p> <p>Consider also including rhetoric, not just imagery, as support.</p>
<p>In <i>Hamlet</i>, the recurring theme of celestial bodies and stars are markers of fate and, therefore, suggest that the presence of God isn't a determiner of fate to many of the characters. This hints at <i>Hamlet</i> having a central theme of religious identity through a lens of nonconformity</p>	<p>I like the idea, though I am not sure I understand the second part (religious identity through nonconformity). The celestial bodies could suggest that the cosmos rules us, regardless of which religious system (Protestant or Catholic) one subscribes to. In the Aristotelian science of the day, the heavens rule the cosmos—see almanacs—and humors rule human feeling.</p> <p>The question is, again, why. Does <i>Hamlet</i> suggest that there is no God ruling our destinies, just planets? Does he believe that because he can't balance the two competing religious systems and so dismisses them both? Or does he succumb to the idea of fate because the burden of choosing is impossible?</p> <p>In addition to heavenly bodies, consider rhetorical support.</p>
<p>The frequent use of parenthesis in <i>Hamlet</i> sets apart characters who deviate from the norm and, therefore, are seen as less reliable and credible than characters who conform to their roles in society.</p>	<p>This is an interesting idea, and it might be useful to eventually link it to Montaigne's style in his very influential essays.</p> <p>Are you arguing that Hamlet's use of parenthesis shows he is an original thinker who cannot survive in a world of mundaneness? That's very Nietzschean. Or are you saying that Hamlet is judged insane because he lacks the credibility of someone like Old Hamlet, who just takes revenge, or Claudius, who uses smarmy language to manage his constituents, or Polonius who is a book of clichés or "sententiae" when in fact he isn't? I feel like I'm waiting for the logical extension of your argument to understand which way to go.</p>