

Hamlet Essay Topics

ENC 1101

Hamlet Research Essay: 750-1000 words. May be longer if you wish.

Due: Listed on Blackboard and on syllabus.

Format: MLA form for manuscript form (double spacing, standard margins) and for documentation: citation notes within the paper and Works Cited entries at the end of the paper.

1. Discuss the destructive nature of revenge in Hamlet: How does revenge destroy more than its intended target? How does Hamlet's hesitation and / or delay increase the level of destruction?
2. Discuss why Hamlet hesitates and / or delays in his revenge: Fear? Uncertainty? He has to be certain who the killer is before he acts, but when he finds out he still hesitates. Depression/Melancholy? Note his excessive grief over the loss of his father, his contemplation of suicide through much of the play. Oedipal conflict? How can he fault his uncle for doing what he may unconsciously desire to do: Kill his father to possess his mother. Note: the "ghost" of his father returns when Hamlet is in his mother's bedchamber.
3. Discuss madness of Hamlet and / or Ophelia. For the English, Madness=Insanity. We know that **Hamlet** is acting mad to deflect suspicion from himself, but is he at times truly mad, even temporarily? **Ophelia's** madness: Note the way her father treats her, after giving such fatherly and sage advice to Laertes. Note the way Hamlet treats her, especially when he thinks she is deceiving him—when her father and the king use her to find out information about Hamlet. Then, note the mixed signals Hamlet gives her before and after the "play" within the play. Finally, discuss how her father's death affects her.
4. Referring to the play *Hamlet*, discuss how the desire for revenge is a destructive force. You can also use examples from current and / or historic cultures you are familiar with or that you research.
5. Referring to Ophelia and Gertrude, discuss the double standard women face in their culture. Gertrude has power only as wife of the King. Ophelia is valuable as a marriage partner to a powerful man, like Hamlet. You may also discuss those matters as seen in historic or current cultures.
6. Discuss the elements of Gothic Horror, like those in the Poe and Faulkner stories, as seen in *Hamlet*.

Specific Requirements for the essay:

1. Must have at least two quotes from the primary source, *Hamlet*.

2. Must have references, quotes or paraphrase, from at least **two secondary sources**. One must be from IRSC database or print sources. Google scholar is acceptable. Since the algorithm from Google works so well, you may want to find articles through Google Scholar but then search for the article title and author's name in our databases, especially for Ebsco and JStor.
3. Secondary sources from internet sites may be used, but try to find higher quality sources. Notes sites like Monarch or Spark notes are good to help you find things in the play or to see basic critical ideas, but they are not peer reviewed professional sources. Historical, sociological or psychological websites from professional organizations are good sources.
4. Ideas we discuss in class are fair game—considered common knowledge, and hence do not have to be cited.
5. **Paraphrases** from **secondary sources** must be introduced by a **signal phrase**. Name the author if one is given, the title if no author is named.
Paraphrases of the primary source do not have to be cited: I know you did not write the play, story, novel, or poem.
7. One long quote, from the play or a secondary source, must be in indented form. That would be four lines or more of poetry or a prose quote (like from an essay) that takes 4 lines or more of your paragraph.