Theme Of Justice In Hamlet And The Lion King: Comparative Essay

Throughout history it has been shown that many literary works can be compared for the vast amounts of similarities within them. William Shakespeare was a highly recognised poet, playwright and actor whose works are still relevant today. Due to the vast popularity of his works there has been many modern adaptations made, including the 1994 movie, The Lion King.

At first The Lion King was thought to be an animated children's drama movie but upon further inspection, it was discovered that it had a similar story line and comparable characters to Hamlet. Hamlet, a tragedy play was originally written in 1599 and first performed in 1609. However, since The Lion King was released there has been a large amount of controversy surrounding whether it was an accurate representation of Hamlet. Although through careful examination it is evident that The Lion King is an accurate, modern translation of Hamlet. The plot of Hamlet and The Lion King are both similar in many aspects.

The common themes in each text, showed similar experiences in Hamlet and Simba finding justness for their fathers. In The Lion King, Simba was forced to cope with the guilt and sorrow from his father's murder and similarly in Hamlet, Hamlet had to continue as Prince after his father was also murdered and his uncle had taken the throne of Denmark. In the time after their fathers' deaths, both characters were sent into exile by their devious uncles. Simba fled Pride Rock after he was convinced by Scar, his uncle, that he himself had caused the murder of his father, and likewise Hamlet was persuaded to leave and travel to England by Claudius, Hamlet's uncle. In Hamlet, Claudius's guileful intentions for sending Hamlet to England became visible, when he said "…The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England; For like the hectic in my blood he rages…" (4.3.67 – 68). Claudius states to the King of England that Hamlet was to be killed immediately. This demonstrates how Claudius wanted Hamlet to be killed so that he wouldn't expose how he had killed the king. Similarly, in The Lion King, Scar tells Simba to "…Run away and never return!" before turning to the hyena's and saying, "kill him".

The similarities between each plot validates that The Lion King is an accurate modern representation of Hamlet. Throughout the two texts, The Lion King and Hamlet, many characters were comparable. The intertextuality between them shows a vast amount of similarities between each character and their experiences. In both literary works, the main characters, Simba and Hamlet, are shown to be royalty as they're both princes and their fathers' were king. They also go through similar experiences including, their fathers being murdered, having a love interest and being at the mercy of their 'evil' uncles. During each text, the protagonist finds a love interest. In The Lion King Nala portrays the role of Ophelia, who is a close friend and love interest to Hamlet. As cubs Nala and Simba were close childhood friends and their romantic interests are shown after Simba was exiled. In Hamlet, Ophelia and Hamlets' romantic attraction becomes apparent quite early in the story, "He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders, of his affection to me" (1.3.99) as Ophelia explained Hamlet as being affectionate and caring towards her.

The intertextuality between the literary works validate that The Lion King is an accurate representation of Hamlet. The Lion King is an accurate modern translation of Shakespeare's,

Hamlet due to the immense amount of similarities within each text. In both literary works they shared the common theme of justice provoked by the ghosts of their fathers. In Hamlet, while Hamlet i on guard King Hamlet reveals himself as a ghost and tells Hamlet to “Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder” (1.5.25). Similarly, in The Lion King, Mufasa appears to Simba and push’s him to remember who he is, the rightful king of Pride rock “…You must take your place in the circle of life… you must remember who you are, the one true king…”. Throughout each storyline, although they have had different structures they both built up to a final moment of justice in the revolution.

In The Lion King the moment of justice was portrayed when the hyenas killed Scar after Simba took the throne back and in Hamlet, it was when Claudius was killed from the poisonous wine. After careful analysis it can be concluded that The Lion King is an accurate modern translation of Hamlet. This can be drawn from the large amount of similarities between each literary work, including plot, characters and general themes. Although there are vast amount of similarities it can be argued that there are also minor differences, involving the outcome of characters and plot details. These dissimilarities can be put to the fact that each separate text was intended for a different audience and time period. Therefore, The Lion King is an accurate representation of Hamlet as it was intended for children unlike Hamlet who was intended for adults.