Themes Of Empathy And Imperative Decision In Hamlet

“Hamlet”, written by William Shakespeare is thought to be of the most acclaimed theatrics ever created, perhaps even the greatest piece written by man. The protagonist Hamlet is thought of to be a prominently avowed Christian, with Christian moralities seen through the dilemmas he faces. Yet, Hamlet is also hypocritical, impulsive, and has a sinister mind. Various unfortunate events happen that lead up to Hamlet’s irrational actions. Hamlet is approached by a mysterious ghost in Act 1. This bizarre figure turns out to be the former King, who is Hamlet’s father. When first introduced, Hamlet did not know that his father had been murdered, but when the dialogue unfolds, it sets up the plot for Hamlet’s investigation and revenge. The murderer is Hamlet’s evil uncle, and newly appointed king, Claudius. Claudius has done everything possible to betray Hamlet, and he is the indisputable antagonist of this story who commits many crimes. Gertrude is Hamlet’s mother and is as deceitful, even to her own son, as Claudius is. The head counselor for Claudius, is a man named Polonius. Polonius is a deceitful character that will betray anyone to look clever in the eyes of the King. Polonius has a daughter, Ophelia, who has a very unusual relationship with Hamlet. The two appear to be in love, but have very conflicting priorities. Ophelia is in love with Hamlet, but loyal to her father Polonius, who continuously aids Claudius in his plots against Hamlet. Polonius also has a son, Laertes, who is a minor character that returns to take revenge on Hamlet after the accidental murder of his father. These characters all partake in heinous actions and will suffer the devastating results as the play proceeds.

In the midst of Hamlets grieving, his deceased father appears to him in a ghostly form, and overwhelms Hamlet with his accusation. The ghost tells Hamlet that he was actually murdered by his own brother, Claudius. Hamlet was never happy about his mother moving on to his uncle so quickly, and the situation was a little too bizarre for Hamlet, he was suspicious. Hamlet never fully trusted anyone around him, but he wants to trust the ghost. If the ghost is being truthful then he could possibly end the strange relationship between his uncle and mother, and to avenge his father’s death. Hamlet sets up an investigation to find out if Claudius really did murder his father. A group of actors comes to perform for the king and queen, which gives Hamlet an opportunity to test his hypothesis. He thinks that if he has the actors/actresses reenact the scene that the ghost described, then Claudius will have an overwhelming reaction to prove that he was the murderer. If Claudius does not have any kind of reaction, then Hamlet will assume that the ghost was a hoax. This scene goes on just as Hamlet was planning, and Claudius becomes so upset when his own murderous act is preformed, that he rushes out of the room. At that time Hamlet believes that he can confidently accuse Claudius. After Hamlet is certain that Claudius murdered his father, he becomes narrow minded and plans to kill Claudius no matter what.

After Claudius storms out from the play, he tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to send Hamlet away to England because he has gone “mad”, but Claudius is just trying to avoid being accused of murder. On his way find Gertrude Hamlet sees Claudius, and has a perfect opportunity to kill him, but he realizes that he is kneeling down and praying for forgiveness. Hamlet draws his sword to kill Claudius, but realizes that if he killed Claudius after he plead for forgiveness in his prayer that he would go straight to heaven. Hamlet does not want this to happen, because he wants wants Claudius to suffer just like his father had to. He decides to

leave Claudius be, and waits for him to commit another unjust act. Once again, Hamlet is faced with the dilemma of attempting to preserve his moral integrity, but may also be demonstrating that he is weak. He goes to find his mother to speak to her of all that has happened, while Polonius is spying on the conversation behind a curtain. He is listening so he can report back to Claudius with further reasoning to send Hamlet away to England. As Gertrude and Hamlet's conversation gets out of hand, Gertrude becomes scared and cries for help. Instinctively, Polonius echoes her cry and without hesitation, Hamlet stabs through the curtain. Hamlet thought that he had killed Claudius, but when he draws the curtain he reveals the dead body of Polonius. Instead of being distraught by the sight, Hamlet is unfazed by the accidental murder, and angry at his mother for marrying Claudius to begin with. Hamlet blames their marriage for all the betrayal that has taken place throughout their friends and family. This scene may show how far gone Hamlet's mind is, because he shows no sympathy or any kind of thought when he impulsively killed Polonius. It seems as if Hamlet's mind is so disturbed that his morals have vanished, and he has the intent to kill Claudius without any hesitation.

There are many symbols that are apparent throughout the play. It all starts with the ghost appearing and foreshadowing bad things are coming, but the ghost can also represent justice is coming. If Old Hamlet hadn't shown at all, there would have be no investigation of his death. Another symbol is the appearance of flowers when Ophelia begins to lose her sanity. She begins offering flowers to the people she sees. When she offers a flower to someone, she then describes what it stands for and then moves onto the next. The flowers are given various representations. She explains that rosemary is for anamnesis, pansy for hope and so forth. Ophelia expresses her heartache from betrayal by offering the flowers and describing what they symbolize in her eyes. Her father's murder and Hamlet's torment eventually takes its toll. That is why the flowers symbolize her inner self destruction, as well as her faithfulness. 'The Mousetrap' is the play titled as "The Murder of Gonzago", which has been altered by Hamlet. The title "The Mousetrap" represents Hamlet's plan to insert his own ideas in the play to force Claudius to confess his crime, or at least show signs of guilt. It is also intriguing that almost all the characters in this short play are based on the real characters who are watching them on the stage. Therefore, the story is symbolical for the trap laid by Hamlet to catch the murderer. One of the most important reoccurring symbols is the poison frequently used to kill someone sneakily. Whenever one character uses poison to murder, it is representing deceit, and betrayal as it was first used to kill Old Hamlet. This is important because when one character is killed by the poison it is not just another death, it has a fuller meaning behind it.

The extensive appeal of "Hamlet" is predominately based off empathy, and that we can somehow insert our own memoirs while observing the play. At some moment everyone must face the dilemma of making an imperative decision between two conflicting demands. Hamlet's struggle, dealing with a corrupt world while attempting to preserve his moral integrity, is an example of the decisions every person will have to make. It also represents how untrustworthy some people can be that are close to us, and this may be immensely relatable. His unstable character, conflicting thoughts, perplexed reactions may make him weak, but at the same time entirely human. The death of Hamlet represents his final wish, to avenge his father's murder. In this final moment Hamlet no longer appears weak. Although his last act in the play is death, he has also redeemed himself and his previous inabilities to act. He has shown when driven to total madness he was willing to avenge his father even with his own life. This reflects the way the other characters find out their own potential when faced with death, whether it be of a greater or lesser standard. The characters in the play avoid the idea of death, even though it is in fact the main theme of the play. Their full potential is attained when they are faced with death, because

they admit to their wrongdoings and accept their fate. Throughout the play the character’s conclusive identities seemed to be cover-ups to how they truly felt. True feelings and intentions always seem to be exposed in the face of death.