

Gaby's Essay

1. Identify the Task

Gaby takes a clear stand (even if she is unsure of her view).

• Hamlet: He Is What He Repeatedly Does

At the onset of young Hamlet's quest for retribution in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, he seeks only to equiponderate the unjust death of his father, King Hamlet; however, he eventually decides to cause the murderer to suffer endlessly in hell, thereby, becoming the very injustice he seeks to make right.

2. Determine What Matters

Because *Hamlet* is a chronological narrative, Gaby organizes chronologically in order to follow the character's development.

• At the beginning of his reparative journey, Hamlet walks a justifiable path. He wishes only to kill his uncle, Claudius, to balance out the unwarranted murder of King Hamlet by Claudius's hand; in his own words, Hamlet wishes to "be cruel, not unnatural" (III.ii.428) in his pursuit of justice. At the start, his father, in the form of a ghost, appears and bids that Hamlet "revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (I.v.31). In a sense, at the beginning of his quest for justice, Hamlet is only following his father's final request, and he honestly believes that he "was born to set it right!" (I.v.211), only because he has a duty to do right by his father.

3. List Possible Strategies

While her essay is chronologically organized, Gaby has drawn on her experience as a writer and superimposed a point and counterpoint strategy.

• However, Hamlet does go so far as to make his revenge "th[e] commandment [by which he] all alone shall live" (I.v.109), and at this very point, Hamlet begins sliding down the slippery slope on which he tumbles into becoming the very injustice himself. He badly wants to avenge his father's death and to set right what his uncle has done wrong, but when his obsession with justice transforms into an outright desire to punish his uncle for his father's death, Hamlet becomes the instrument, even the embodiment, of the very injustice he attempts to redress. Hamlet resolves to kill Claudius while he kneels and attempts to confess his many sins, but Hamlet then decides that killing his uncle after he had repented for his transgressions would be too light of a punishment; Hamlet feels "a more horrid hent" (III.iii.94) is appropriate for his uncle and his crime.

To this effect, Hamlet proclaims, “. . . And I am then revenged / To take him in the purging of his soul, / When he is fit and seasoned for his passage? / No.” (III.iii.89–93). This utterance marks the turning point for Hamlet. This decision serves as his *hamartia*; this decision is his fatal one. Hamlet openly wishes for his uncle to suffer in the worst way possible, saying his wishes to kill his uncle “about some act / That has no relish of salvation in’ t— / Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven, / And that his soul may be as damned and black / As hell, whereto it goes” (III. iii.96–100). Thus, Hamlet’s resolution to damn his uncle to eternal burning and suffering is the same resolution that Claudius makes in killing the elder King Hamlet; thus, by this decision, Hamlet has indeed become the very injustice he seeks to redress. He has abandoned the just path on which he set out and has adopted a path of ruthlessness and of a will to punish. Hamlet has moved from wanting to justly take an eye for an eye to unjustly wanting to take an entire body for an eye, and this decision determines his tragic downfall, for he cannot live as he seeks to dole out injustice instead of justice.

4. Test It Out

Gaby’s outline provided a road map for her to reach this argument about the play. Her first test was the outline; her second is the essay itself.

As some critics argue, Hamlet becomes the very injustice he seeks to redress, and in that transformation is his misstep that leads to his eventual and tragic downfall. Yet Hamlet did not set out on a path of injustice; rather, he sets out to right a wrong. But, when his desire to right the wrong transforms into a desire to not only right the wrong but to also punish the wrongdoer indefinitely, Hamlet seals his fate. At that decision to make an act of equalization become an act of endless punishment, Hamlet metamorphs into the very injustice he attempted to remedy.

5. Apply to All Content

By the time she has reached her conclusion, Gaby has proven that her organizational strategy works.