



Hamlet Death and Grieving

The uncertainty about death, the impermanence of life, and the process of grief are prominent themes in *Hamlet*. Exploring these themes will deepen your understanding of the text as a whole.

First, review the sample quote and responses.

Then, read the next two quotes and respond to the prompts in each box.

Finally, find and record a quote from *Hamlet* that illustrates the same thematic ideas and respond to the prompts.

HAMLET:

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly. These indeed "seem,"
For they are actions that a man might play.
But I have that within which passeth show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.
(No Fear: 1.2.76–86)

Write a short summary describing the moment when the character expresses the theme of death and grief. This may require you to go back and review the scene from which the quote is taken.

Gertrude wants her son, Hamlet, to stop mourning for his dead father and show respect to her new husband, Hamlet's uncle, the new king. Hamlet explains that he feels too much grief and sorrow over King Hamlet's death to simply move forward.

Identify at least two pertinent poetic devices used in the scene to convey the theme of death and grief. Explain how each helps to convey the theme.

Device 1:

Metaphor: "Tis not alone my inky cloak,"

This is a metaphor comparing the color of Hamlet's clothes to ink. This suggests that Hamlet is wearing all black, the traditional color of mourning.

Device 2:

Personification: "Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,"

The visage, or face, is personified by giving it the human quality of being dejected and having behavior. Hamlet suggests that his face is downcast and looks sad because of his grief.

How does the scene demonstrate uncertainty about death, the impermanence of life, and/or the process of grief?

Hamlet is grieving for the death of his father, the former king. In this scene, Claudius and Gertrude feel that Hamlet's grief is too strong; they argue that he has to accept death and loss as an inevitable part of life.

How does Shakespeare use this scene to demonstrate the power and influence that death and grieving have over a person's actions?

Hamlet is overcome by the loss of his father. His sullenness is observable and causes concern in others, specifically his mother and King Claudius. Through Hamlet's grief, Shakespeare demonstrates that losing a loved one can be overwhelming and even crippling to an individual.

HAMLET:

O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
 And shall I couple hell? Oh, fie! Hold, hold, my heart,
 And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
 But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee!
 Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
 In this distracted globe. Remember thee!
 Yea, from the table of my memory
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
 That youth and observation copied there,
 And thy commandment all alone shall live
 Within the book and volume of my brain,
 Unmixed with baser matter. Yes, by heaven!
 O most pernicious woman!
 O villain, villain, smiling, damnèd villain!
 (No Fear: 1.5.92–106)

Write a short summary describing the moment when the character expresses the theme of death and grief. This may require you to go back and review the scene from which the quote is taken.

Identify at least two pertinent poetic devices used in the scene to convey the theme of death and grief. Explain how each helps to convey the theme.

Device 1:

Device 2:

How does the scene demonstrate uncertainty about death, the impermanence of life, and/or the process of grief?

How does Shakespeare use this scene to demonstrate the power and influence that death and grieving have over a person's actions?

HAMLET:

To be, or not to be? That is the question—
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 And, by opposing, end them? To die, to sleep—
 No more—and by a sleep to say we end
 The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to—'tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wished! To die, to sleep.
 To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub,
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
 Must give us pause. There's the respect
 That makes calamity of so long life.

(No Fear: 3.1.57-70)

Write a short summary describing the moment when the character expresses the theme of death and grief. This may require you to go back and review the scene from which the quote is taken.

Identify at least two pertinent poetic devices used in the scene to convey the theme of death and grief. Explain how each helps to convey the theme.

Device 1:

Device 2:

How does the scene demonstrate uncertainty about death, the impermanence of life, and/or the process of grief?

How does Shakespeare use this scene to demonstrate the power and influence that death and grieving have over a person's actions?

Your Chosen Quote:

Write a short summary describing the moment when the character expresses the theme of death and grief. This may require you to go back and review the scene from which the quote is taken.

Identify at least two pertinent poetic devices used in the scene to convey the theme of death and grief. Explain how each helps to convey the theme.

Device 1:

Device 2:

How does the scene demonstrate uncertainty about death, the impermanence of life, and/or the process of grief?

How does Shakespeare use this scene to demonstrate the power and influence that death and grieving has over a person's actions?

RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

W.11-12.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.