

HAMLET ESSAY EXAM

As the world moves to a more digital platform, education will continue to follow suit in the form of electronic assessments. The following exam simulates what many hybrid (classroom/online) college courses will require of students to demonstrate proficiency and synthesis of skills in a given course.

THE TEST: Below, I have given you five questions. You are required to answer two of them. Each answer must be in the form of a multi-paragraph essay with documentation from both the text (the play) and an outside article (scholarly journal) to support your answer.

CHOICES:

- 1.) According to Francis Bacon, the most tolerable sort of revenge is “for those wrongs which there is no law or remedy” (Bacon, 1625). Had Hamlet survived the poisoned sword of Laertes and carried out revenge on Claudius, would the society of 1625 excuse his crime or persecute him for treason? Support your answer with direct and/or indirect quotes from the play as well as scholarly articles.
- 2.) Many critics have argued that Shakespeare was, indeed, either a sexist or a social commentator of Elizabethan society’s view of women. What conclusions can you draw based on the characters of Gertrude and Ophelia in *Hamlet*? Did Shakespeare see women as weak or powerless? Support your answer with direct and/or indirect quotes from the play as well as scholarly articles.
- 3.) At the end of the play, Horatio is the lone survivor for two reasons: his loyalty and to serve as a mouthpiece to relay the events that conspired in Denmark among the royal family. However, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were killed for their lack of loyalty, although they were only following royal orders. Argue why Shakespeare’s decisions to let Horatio live and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern die were justified. Support your answer with direct and/or indirect quotes from the play as well as scholarly articles.
- 4.) One of the main questions left unanswered in the text is whether or not Ophelia committed suicide. Use evidence from the text and scholarly articles to support your point of view. Also, compare and contrast society’s view of suicide back then with suicide now. How did the church see suicide back then? How does church and society view suicide now?
- 5.) Hamlet’s hesitation to extract revenge is, without a doubt, this tragic hero’s tragic flaw. We are told all too often today to think before we speak and think about our actions and the consequences. Of course, Hamlet’s inner turmoil and external obstacles delayed his actions even more. Do you think his extreme self doubt and inaction was a result of cowardice or calculated thinking from a noble resigned to accept his fate? Argue your point of view with direct and/or indirect quotes from the play as well as scholarly articles.

