

Worksheet 11 – Revenge

Review

Answer these questions about the previous video lecture to check how much you remember.

1. How many times does the audience get to see or hear the story of the Old King Hamlet's murder?
 - a) 7
 - b) 5
 - c) 3
 - d) 2

2. What does John McRae state that the whole play is set out to do? What is its purpose?
 - a) Test friendships
 - b) Show Hamlet growing up
 - c) Show how Denmark needs a new ruler
 - d) Search for the truth of some really complex issues

3. Which musical instrument is used to explore Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's friendship with Hamlet?
 - a) Recorder
 - b) Lute
 - c) Drum
 - d) Cello

Recall

Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.

4. Whilst Claudius is learning to live with his guilt, what does John McRae say that Hamlet is learning?
 - a) How best to punish his mum?
 - b) How evil Claudius is?
 - c) What revenge really is?
 - d) How few loyal friends he has?

5. Does John McRae think that Hamlet is right to delay killing Claudius whilst he is praying?
 - a) Yes, it is not the right time or place.
 - b) No, it's a sign that is incapable of action
 - c) No, he is clearly too much of an academic to kill someone
 - d) Yes, it shows that he is too kind.

6. What sort of revenge does Fortinbras seek for the death of his father?
 - a) A pure revenge
 - b) A corrupted and poisonous revenge
 - c) A chaotic revenge
 - d) A militaristic revenge

Analysis :

7. Let's look again at what John McRae's discussion of Hamlet's 5th soliloquy. Re-watch from 00.50 – 04.25.

McRae talks about how this soliloquy is an example of Hamlet showing the traditions of previous revenge tragedies. The language is full of supernatural imagery and extreme drama.

Re-read lines 378 – 382 and underline all of the nouns.

- a) List them and look at the lexical field that they all come from.
- b) Now underline the verbs. Again, note the lexical field.
- c) Lastly, list the adjectives. How do these link together?

Whilst this is a very short extract, the way that Hamlet speaks here is very different than either his usual normal patterns or his pretend madness. What aspects of his personality is he showing here? McRae states that he is pretending and acting the revenge hero but by exploring the language further, have you discovered another side of Hamlet through these short lines? Think about how this might foreshadow Hamlet's later behavior with the pirates?

Extension: Use the list that you have created and write three different poems; one will use all of the nouns that Hamlet has used; one will use the verbs and one will use the adjectives.

8. Read the rest of the soliloquy and note down the images that are contrasted with each other. How does this show the conflicted nature of Hamlet as he approaches his Mother?
9. Now re-watch the video from 5.50 to 7.26 and re-read Act 3 scene 3 L73-96; the 6th soliloquy. There are two lists here that contrast. One describes the state of Hamlet's father at the time of his death; the other lists what Hamlet wants Claudius to be doing, when he kills him. How do these two lists compare with each other? Try to add this to the other comparisons between Claudius and Old Hamlet that we have seen?

Extension: How does this foreshadow the comparisons that Hamlet is about to confront his mother with?

Evaluation

10. When John McRae is discussing the revenge language, he discusses the old traditions of revenge tragedy so I want us to spend a little time looking at the Spanish Tragedy written by Thomas Kyd between 1582-1592.

Here is a very brief summary from stageagent.com:

It is the aftermath of a bloody battle between Spain and Portugal. Even though the Spanish were victorious, the ghost of Spanish nobleman Don Andrea returns, accompanied by the personification of Revenge. Before he can be at peace in the afterlife, his death must be avenged. In the war, he was killed by the Portuguese prince Balthazar, who was in turn captured. But Balthazar is receiving a royal welcome at the Spanish court, accompanied by Lorenzo, the brother of Bel-Imperia. At the same time, Bel-Imperia--beloved of Don Andrea--falls in love with Horatio, Don Andrea's friend and victor of Balthazar. A new battle begins, a battle for the affections of Bel-Imperia, a battle that turns bloody when Balthazar and

Lorenzo murder Horatio. His death forges a new path of revenge, pursued by Horatio's father Hieronimo, who must battle his own doubts and fend off impending madness as he seeks to destroy the men that killed his son.

Think about where there are parallels or similar elements between this play and Hamlet.

Then, do some research and read more about this play. Start with the Wikipedia page and follow the references used there.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Spanish_Tragedy

It has been used as a standard that all other revenge tragedies have been held to. Although John McRae is very clear that in the 5th soliloquy, Hamlet is clearly pointing at the fact that this play is NOT a traditional revenge tragedy, have a look at the elements and see where this play might have used aspects of the old traditions.

Here is a short summary of the play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpCHPJ7A-FM>

Extension:

Read the whole play and see how it differs significantly from Hamlet.

Here is an audio version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwCt70xV0Bk>

Here is a printed version: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6043/6043-h/6043-h.htm>

Glossary

Filial - relating to or due from a son or daughter.

Invocation - the action of invoking someone or something; an incantation used to invoke a deity or the supernatural.

Oedipus- the son of Laius and Jocasta, the king and queen of Thebes, who killed his father, being unaware of his identity, and unwittingly married his mother, by whom he had four children. When the truth was revealed, he put out his eyes and Jocasta killed herself.

Hypocrite - a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion; a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings

Militaristic - advocating or pursuing an aggressive military policy; hawkish.

Corrupted - cause to act dishonestly in return for money or personal gain; cause to become morally depraved; change or debase by making errors or unintentional alterations.

Confide - tell someone about a secret or private matter while trusting them not to repeat it to others; trust (someone) enough to tell them of a secret or private matter.

Disastrously- in a way that causes great damage; in an extremely unsuccessful way.

