

HAMLET ESSAY PROMPTS



THE
READINESS
IS ALL

Develop a thesis that specifically, thoroughly, and competently answers the prompt (while relating it to the meaning of the work as a whole) for your selected/assigned stylistic motif listed below:

INTERNAL EVENTS

In Hamlet, some of the most significant events are mental or psychological: awakenings, discoveries, changes in consciousness, etc. In a well-organized essay, describe how Shakespeare manages to give these internal events the sense of excitement, suspense, and climax usually associated with external action. Do not merely summarize the plot.

MINOR CHARACTER

In some works of literature, a character who appears briefly, or does not appear at all, is a significant presence. Write an essay in which you show how such a character functions in Hamlet. You might choose to discuss how Shakespeare uses the character to affect action, theme, or the development of other characters. Avoid plot summary.

SOCIAL OCCASIONS

Some works of literature often include scenes of weddings, funerals, parties, and other social occasions. Such scenes may reveal the values of the characters and the society in which they live. Select such a scene from Hamlet and, in a focused essay, discuss the contribution the scene makes to the meaning of the play as a whole.

CONFLICTING DIRECTIONS

The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote, "*Nobody, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguing thing it is to have a man's mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time.*"

From Hamlet, choose a character (not necessarily Hamlet) whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and explain how this conflict within one character illuminates the meaning of the play as a whole.