

The Tragedy of Hamlet in Modern Movies

Instructions: In order to think about the play *Hamlet* and its relevance to modern society, we will watch a number of film-clips and discuss how the authors were clearly influenced by the bard's classic tale. Please answer the questions that follow the clips.

Movie Clip One: *Transformers* (Final battle scene between Megatron and Optimus Prime to when the bad robot's bodies are discarded into the sea)

1. What is Megatron's motivation? Who has a similar motivation in the play?
2. What does the "All Spark" represent?
3. What is used to kill Megatron? What then is Megatron's fatal flaw?
4. After Megatron is killed, what does Optimus Prime reveal about his relationship to Megatron?
5. What character from the play does Megatron mirror in both character and tragic flaw? Provide specific connections between the text and the film and identify how both share the same tragic flaw.

Movie Clip Two: *Batman Begins* (From the opera scene when Bruce was a child to when he is kicked out of Rachel's car after his parent's murderer is killed)

1. What tragedy motivates Bruce Wayne? What characters in the play could he be compared with? Why?
2. How does Bruce Wayne alienate Rachel the girl he loves? How is this similar to Hamlet and Ophelia?
3. How are Bruce Wayne and Hamlet both similarly tortured heroes?
4. Is Batman the only popular hero motivated by this type of tragedy, or are other characters in movies motivated by similar incidents? List them and explain.
5. How has the play *Hamlet* influenced modern hero movies and why do you think it carries such influence?

Assignment Essay

Using the information from this activity and specific quotes from the play, answer the following prompt in a five-paragraph essay:

How did Shakespeare use characterization and the concept of "the flawed character" in a meaningful and still relevant way?

The Tragedy of Hamlet in Modern Movies (Teacher Copy)

Instructions: In order to think about the play *Hamlet* and its relevance to modern society, we will watch a number of film-clips and discuss how the authors were clearly influenced by the bard's classic tale. As we watch the movies, please answer the questions that follow.

Movie Clip One: *Transformers* (Final battle scene between Megatron and Optimus Prime to when the bad robot's bodies are discarded into the sea)

1. What is Megatron's motivation? Who has a similar motivation in the play?
Megatron is motivated by his lust for power, similar to Claudius.
2. What does the "All Spark" represent? What is this similar to in the play?
The "All Spark" represents absolute power. This is similar to the role the throne or kingship holds in the play.
3. What is used to kill Megatron? Why is this poignant? What then is Megatron's tragic flaw?
Megatron is killed when the "All Spark" is inserted in his chest. This is interesting because he killed by the very object he desires. Moreover, since the "All Spark" represents power, it can be said that Megatron was killed by the very power he sought. Therefore, Megatron's lust for power is his tragic flaw.
4. After Megatron is killed, what does Optimus Prime reveal about his relationship to Megatron?
Megatron and Optimus Prime turn out to be brothers.
5. What character from the play does Megatron mirror in both character and tragic flaw? Provide specific connections between the text and the film and identify how both share the same tragic flaw.
Megatron is similar to King Claudius in the play. Both strongly desire power. In the movie, Megatron desires an object that will give him absolute power, while Claudius desires the throne. Likewise, both are so blinded by their desire for power that they are even willing to murder their siblings for it. Finally, both ultimately fall because of their desire for power. Whereas, Claudius is killed by Hamlet as a result of all the terrible things he did to gain and retain his kingship, Megatron is killed by the literal power he desires. If neither went to such extremes in their pursuit of power neither would have met their respective tragic ends.

Movie Clip Two: *Batman Begins* (From the opera scene when Bruce was a child to when he is kicked out of Rachel's car after his parent's murderer is killed)

6. What tragedy motivates Bruce Wayne? What characters in the play could he be compared with? How are their identities changed similarly? **Bruce Wayne is motivated by the murder of his father and mother. His identity changes as a result of his father's death. This is symbolized by his eventual transformation into Batman. He could be compared to Hamlet, since Hamlet's motivation in the play stems from his father's murder. Hamlet's identity is also changed by this tragedy. Hamlet begins to act crazy as part of his plan to seek revenge. Really, everything he does in the play is a result of his father's murder. Comparatively, both Bruce Wayne and Hamlet are not only affected by the death of their fathers, but both take on new identities and personas as a way of coping with their loss.**
7. How does Bruce Wayne alienate Rachel the girl he loves? How is this similar to Hamlet and Ophelia? **Bruce Wayne's drive for revenge, as seen in his desire to kill his father's murderer, alienates Rachel. She becomes disgusted by his obsession with vengeance and his lack of regard for her values. Similarly, Hamlet's desire for revenge alienates Ophelia. In order to take revenge, Hamlet acts crazy, often at Ophelia's expense. He in essence puts his desire for revenge over Ophelia's feelings and drives her away from him. Like Batman, Hamlet's desire to avenge his father ends up straining his relationship with the woman he loves.**
8. How are Bruce Wayne and Hamlet both similarly tortured heroes? **Neither character takes up the mantle as "hero" because they desire to. Both feel compelled to take action because the tragic loss of their fathers. Both characters are riddled with pain and anguish, motivated by a loss nothing will replace. If not for the tragedy in their lives, neither would have likely have taken on such a role. Likewise, they sacrifice everything to this pain and the desire for vengeance, including who they are and their closest relationships.**
9. Is Batman the only popular hero motivated by this type of tragedy, or are other characters in movies motivated by similar incidents? List them and explain. **Spiderman, Iron Man, Superman, etc. All our motivated by the loss of loved ones.**
10. How has the play *Hamlet* influenced modern hero movies and why do you think it carries such influence? **Answers will vary**

Assignment Essay

Using the information from this activity and specific quotes from the play, answer the following prompt in a five-paragraph essay:

How did Shakespeare use characterization and the concept of “the flawed character” in a meaningful and still relevant way?

Answers will vary but should include a discussion of the destructive power of revenge and ambition, and how both are timeless, human issue.