

The Influence of William Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Modern World

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Although written over 400 years ago, Hamlet remains one of the most imitated and relevant plays in contemporary society. Interpretations of Shakespeare's classic tale of revenge have appeared in some surprising places: children's TV shows and movies, the popular Sunday comic strip, the popular TV series about a corrupt biker gang, and other well-known shows, movies, and best-selling contemporary novels.

William Shakespeare wrote Hamlet around 1600, telling the story of a prince grieving the death of his father and the too-quick remarriage of his mother to his uncle. The play uses mental health issues, both real and fake, as a means of illustrating the nuances of human behavior. Commonly studied in high schools across America, even though it was written as a play for entertainment, Hamlet has had a perhaps unintended but nonetheless profound effect on the way mental health is viewed. The complex story and its twists and turns have captivated many readers and shaped opinions for centuries without any sign of losing its relevance. The novelty of Shakespeare's work lies in the complexity of the character of Hamlet. His matches, while certainly different from this era, resonated and still resonate with audiences today.

One aspect of Hamlet's appeal throughout the ages is that he is trapped in an impossible situation and how he works to resolve this predicament in his own way. In this way, the play is rightfully seen as one of the most humanistic stories ever written. All of his characters are relatable people, even after 400 years, with motivations that can be understood and appreciated, and reactions that make sense, then and now. For example, Ophelia's illness is very real and treated sympathetically, culminating in her death being treated with the utmost respect. Shakespeare's treatment of her mental condition is truly powerful, especially considering that it was written at a time when people with mental illness were not respected and instead were often abused or neglected. The grief shown after her death is another example of Shakespeare's understanding of the human condition and how people really behave. Hamlet's anguish at her departure is a feeling shared by all who have lost someone dear, and thus provides a connection to readers who may have experienced a similar loss by letting them know that he is not alone in having unsettling feelings when confronted with the terrible loss. Hamlet's solution is clearly not perfect, but it forces the reader to confront their own situation: how could we do better?

With the incorporation of Hamlet's plot into movies, television shows, and modern music, it is abundantly clear that Hamlet has become deeply and permanently embedded in today's modern culture. Movies like *The Lion King* and *The Godfather* are very similar to the plot of Hamlet. Released in theaters in 1994 (and then in theaters as a musical in 1997), *The Lion King* is closely related to some key plot points in Hamlet, including the death of King Mufasa at the hands of his scheming brother Scar. In *The Lion King*, the main character, the young lion Simba, has an evil uncle named Scar. Scar is jealous of his brother Mufasa who is the king of the Pride Lands and longing to be king in his place, he ends up killing his brother to get what he wants. Like Simba, Hamlet has an uncle Claudius. At the beginning of the play, Claudius has already become king - perhaps by killing his brother, who was previously king. In *The Lion King*, Mufasa's young son Simba is visited by the ghost of his dead father, and there is even comic relief provided by two supporting characters - Timon and Pumbaa ("*The Lion King*"). Many debate whether the references to Hamlet were intentional or not, but either way the story resembles that of the elusive Shakespearean play.

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Perhaps one of the most similar modern works to Hamlet is *The Godfather*, a classic 1972 film directed by Francis Ford Coppola. *The Godfather* is a category-defining mafia crime film about Michael Corleone, a World War II war hero who openly volunteers to take control of his father's (Vito Corleone) mafia business after the deaths of his father and older brother. In the film, the protagonist Michael Corleone is not seen as a tragic hero. Although he does not have an obvious definitive "fatal flaw", many similarities can be drawn between him and Hamlet, one of Shakespeare's most famous tragic heroes. Their roles as troubled heirs to power, the theme

of revenge, and the concept of falling from "grace" are just a few examples of how these two characters - Hamlet and Michael Corleone - share the same story.

The most-watched TV series parallel to Hamlet is the FX Network's *Sons of Anarchy*, which aired from 2008 to 2014. Its creator, Kurt Sutter, has been quoted on numerous occasions as saying that *Sons of Anarchy* is loosely based on the story of Shakespeare's Hamlet. In the play, Claudius becomes both King of Denmark and the husband of Queen Gertrude after his brother Hamlet the Elder dies under questionable circumstances. Prince Hamlet is conflicted in his relationship with his uncle/stepfather as well as his mother's seeming complacency about it all. Prince Hamlet is visited by his father's ghost, who informs him that Claudius was responsible for his death and that he needs the prince to avenge that death in order to escape purgatory. In the *Sons of Anarchy* series, Clay Morrow becomes the president of the Sons of Anarchy, an outlaw motorcycle club, following the death of the club's founder and president John Teller in a motorcycle accident, just as Claudius and Hamlet Sr. were Morrow and Teller. "brothers" to each other through mutual association with the club. Like Claudius, Clay marries Teller's widow, Gemma, and becomes stepfather to her son, Jax, who, like Hamlet, is the club's vice president and second in line to the throne. Through the discovery of John Teller's long-lost manuscript and a series of old letters, Jax begins to speak with the "spirit" of his long-dead father, in a sense, and discovers that Clay is responsible for John's death. by sabotaging his motorcycle. Jax then begins to set in motion a very complicated plot to oust Clay from running the club and potentially kill him as well. As the show progresses, it also becomes apparent that Gemma herself also had some complicity in John's death.

One of the most popular and longest-running television shows, the animated comedy *The Simpsons*, has an episode entirely devoted to Hamlet. In this episode, the characters reenact the play with considerable liberties, which is great comedy. Bart Simpson portrayed Prince Hamlet in *The Simpsons* version of William Shakespeare's classic. His uncle Claudius (bartender Moe Szyslak) married Gertrude (Marge Simpson) after killing King Hamlet (Homer Simpson) with poison. The king returns to his son as a ghost, tells him of the betrayal and asks that his death be avenged. Prince Hamlet (Bart Simpson) plays a game with the help of a professional actor (Krusty the Clown) to reveal that Claudius (Moe) is guilty; However, Hamlet's (Homer's) reaction leads everyone to believe he is crazy, so Ophelia (Lisa Simpson) decides to "drive him crazy by jumping around and singing a silly song, eventually jumping out of a window into a ditch where he drowns." . Because Hamlet knows what he has done, Claudius tries to kill him. Hamlet, aiming to kill Claudius, accidentally kills Polonius (Chief Wiggum). Polonius pleads with his son Laertes (Ralph Wiggum) to avenge his death, who, in classic Ralph Wiggum simpleton fashion, exclaims, "I love revenge! Laertes, preparing to duel Hamlet, accidentally kills himself with his 'practice jab' and Hamlet proceeds to murder Claudius. Meanwhile, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (Carl and Lenny) were covered in poison and high-fived each other to death. Hamlet leaves to celebrate, but slips on blood and dies. Gertrude, seeing a big mess she doesn't want to clean up, commits suicide by hitting herself on the head with a mace ("Making Hamlet to the Simpsons"). At the end of this absurd episode, Bart expresses that he thinks Hamlet was boring even though every character was murdered, but Homer tells him that the story was made into a great movie called *Ghostbusters* and all the Simpsons dance to Ray Parker Jr's theme song . .

Shakespeare's classic story is even reflected in contemporary music. "Ophelia", the first single released from The Lumineers' album, *Cleopatra*, is a hauntingly beautiful song with lyrics that tell the story of Hamlet. The song originally started as a slower instrumental demo that Jeremiah Fraites (one third of The Lumineers) sent to Wesley Schultz (lead singer of The Lumineers) in 2011. According to Schultz, the demo generated enough excitement to work on the project. While playing at a local bar in Los Angeles alongside The Lumineers, Schultz wrote the song's hook: "O-o-Ophelia, girl, you hit me like a drug." O-o-phelie, heaven help the fool who falls in love." The song is named after an idea from Shakespeare's Hamlet. The lyrics state, "And I feel no pity / And you see not my blindness," a parallel to Ophelia's undying love for Hamlet, who did not regret the premature end of their romance. The emotional distance between these two characters from the tragedy is evident in this song. Shakespeare scholar or not, any listener to this interpretation of the story of Hamlet will realize the message - that the pain of love is universal.

Although Hamlet is centuries old, it has had a long-lasting and lasting influence on today's culture. After all these years, artists continue to appreciate the well-crafted story line that many movies, TV shows, and songs use to reach their audience. Hamlet is relevant today for many reasons. One of the most important is that we still feel inspired to think about the meaning of life and wonder what we would do in dire circumstances. The tragedy of Prince Hamlet is timeless in this respect. Shakespeare's Hamlet also provides an opportunity for modern readers to connect history with the present. The relatability of Hamlet's struggles within the play makes it a perfect example for current and future stories. Society can relate to his nature and understand the complexity of his nature and situation. The same characterization and plot can be seen in classics like *The Lion King* and revered TV shows like *The Simpsons*. Unintentionally, of course, but Shakespeare nevertheless created a play that influenced society for generations.

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