

Hamlet by William Shakespeare: Analysed Textual Examples

Technique	Example	Effect
Motif Repetition Connotation	"Why seems it so particular with thee?"	- The repetition of word "seems" is imbued with negativity to highlight how the Court is adversely suffering through deception
Motif Juxtaposition	"Seeming-virtuous queen"	- Juxtaposition of Gertrude's outward and actual character demonstrates her complacency in morally wrong actions
Iambic Pentameter Alliteration Assonance	"With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage"	- Claudius' speech often smoothes out the paradoxes that are present in his speech
Subversion Iambic Pentameter	"My words fly up, my thoughts remain below/Words without thoughts never to heaven go"	- The break from iambic pentameter shows Claudius' moment of truth
Hamartia/Fatal flaw Mirroring	N/A	- While Kydian patterns would suggest Hamlet's fatal flaw is inaction, the fact that Hamlet mirrors his uncle's deceiving disposition makes it ambiguous as to what his fatal flaw actually is and that his deception has also plays a part in his fate.

* Shakespeare was a dramatist and theatre-poet who wrote Hamlet for the theatre. So, it's best to also incorporate some dramatic techniques for your essay.



Hamlet by William Shakespeare: Sample Paragraph Analysis

The deception that permeates Claudius' court illustrates the political tension between appearance and reality, and whether deception can be morally used without any consequences. The motif of deception that reappears through the negative connotation of the word "seeming" is most present in Hamlet and Gertrude's first conversation, where Gertrude apathetically asks Hamlet "Why seems it so particular with thee?" suggesting he is only pretending to be mournful at the wedding celebration. This is juxtaposed when the Ghost declares that Gertrude is incestuous and a "seeming-virtuous queen", through which Shakespeare demonstrates how the deceitful tactics rife within the court clouds the innate human ability to empathise with honest feelings, even if it is their son's grief. The play further scrutinises the moral ambiguity of Machiavellian politics and surveillance tactics within the Elizabethan era, wherein the character of Claudius demonstrates how truth also has its benefits. Throughout most of the play, Claudius speaks in an orderly iambic pentameter that convinces his Court of his honesty, even when it is nothing more than casuistry. During his wedding celebration, his line "With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage" is smooth-sounding as it combines alliteration and assonance, however when listened closely, also allows the Court to accept his quick marriage to Gertrude. On the other hand, Claudius evades Hamlet's first attempt to kill him when he confesses that he cannot pray. His couplet "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below/ Words without thoughts never to heaven go" breaks away from alliteration and subverts the iambic pentameter, which shows how in truth, one may also save themselves in an alternative way that is outside of political gain. As they both hypocritically resort to Machiavellian tactics to discern the truth, the tragic hero Hamlet and villain Claudius mirror one other. Here, the dramatic tragedy begs the question of whether Hamlet's fatal flaw is actually of deception, and not of delay and inaction. Ultimately, the play serves to show the distinct cautionary lessons of deceit whereby the deaths of both characters show the fatal consequences of playing with wrongful tactics.



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