

Many people know that *Hamlet* deals with issues of suicide and death, but many are unaware that Shakespeare wrote it at a time of personal grief. Shakespeare's only son and heir died from the plague in 1596 at the age of 11. That boy's name was Hamnet.

Shakespeare began composition on *Hamlet* in 1599 and followed its publication with his strongest and most tragic works, including *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Julius Caesar*. Hamlet goes through a classic progression of grief in the play, which according to the Kübler-Ross model is denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Track how Hamlet progresses through the five stages of grief throughout the play. Try to go in chronological order, if possible. Provide a summary of how Hamlet shows the described feelings, as well as textual quotes to support your answer.

Denial

explanation:

textual support:

Anger

explanation:

textual support:

Bargaining

explanation:

textual support:

Depression

explanation:

textual support:

Acceptance

explanation:

textual support:

HAMLET

A STUDY OF GRIEF

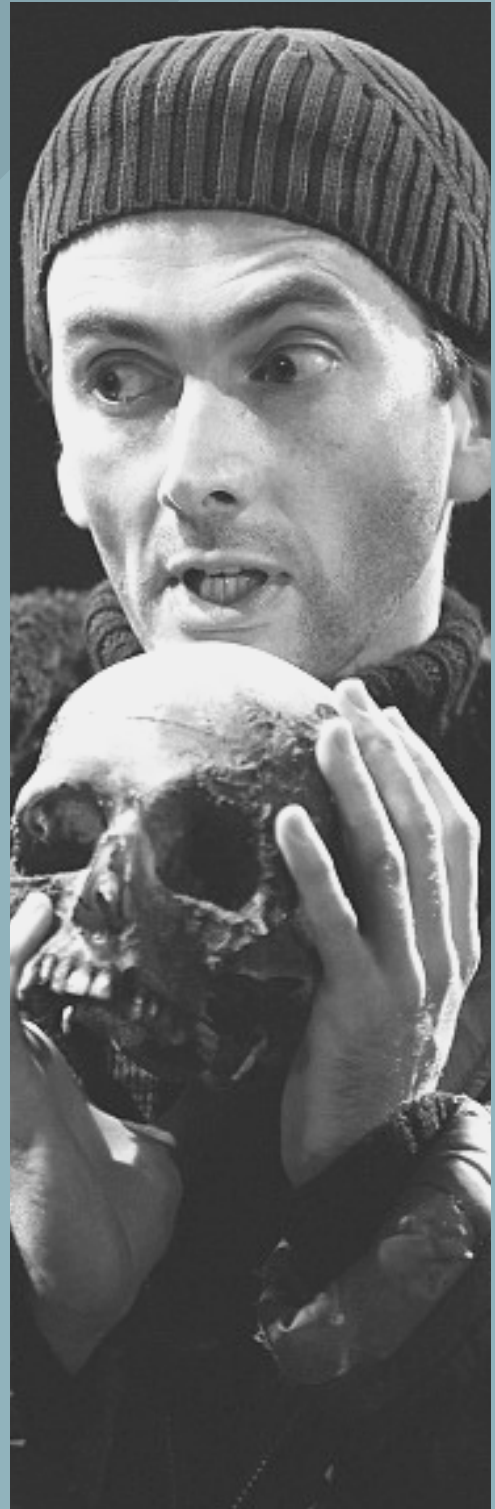


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Furthermore, in *Hamlet* almost every character struggles with grief and many of them grieve inappropriately or incompletely. Track the characters' grief and in the end consider how the composition of *Hamlet* could be an outlet for Shakespeare's own personal grief.

Gertrude:

How does she grieve inappropriately?

Ophelia:

How does she grieve inappropriately?

Laertes:

How does he grieve inappropriately?

Once you finish reading *Hamlet*, consider how the whole play functions as a statement on life and death. Overall, what do you think Shakespeare meant for readers and viewers to take away from his play? Additionally, how does grief function as a theme in *Hamlet*?



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