

Hamlet's Melancholy-Essay

Recall that the exposition of a play provides key details that will inform our understanding of the plot and characters. During the exposition of *Hamlet*, we are introduced to Hamlet who is depicted as stereotypically melancholy.

Task: Write a minimum two-page essay in which you discuss how the overt melancholic temperament in Hamlet, referring to both a physical and a mental disturbance in him, affects your understanding of Hamlet and his fate in the play.

Some questions to consider as you develop your essay:

- What specific trait of melancholy most significantly influences Hamlet's fate in the play? Is this melancholy trait overcome? Does it contribute to the tragic events at the end of the play?
- How does Hamlet's melancholy shape the dramatic structure of the play?
- How is your view of a character or conflict changed or supported by the "humoral" analysis?

A successful essay will:

- state, develop, and support a focused claim (thesis) about a specific aspect of the melancholic disposition that is particularly significant for understanding Hamlet's actions, and
- support each claim with close reading and textual analysis from *Hamlet* that conveys a strong understanding of the language of the play and the concepts of the four humors, and
- have clear organization, correct sentence structures and word choice, and coherent paragraphs that convey a single analytical point (stated in a topic sentence in each paragraph), and
- conclude with a paragraph that summarizes the main argument of the essay and articulates its significance.