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*Begin at  
 the book*

### The Effect of the Oedipus Complex in *Hamlet* ✓

In William Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*, the main character, Hamlet, portrays signs of the Oedipus Complex. Early on in the play, Hamlet learns from his father's ghost that his father had been murdered by Hamlet's uncle, Claudius (1.5.10-20). Claudius ~~has now~~ assumed the throne and ~~has~~ re-married Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. The re-marriage angers Hamlet as he believes it is incestuous and wants his mother's love to himself (1.2.130-159). Madness runs throughout the mind of Hamlet and the love towards his mother causes other relationships to be impacted. Therefore, the relationship between Hamlet and Gertrude can be seen through the lens of Sigmund Freud's, Oedipus Complex, and how it effects Hamlet's relationship with other characters in the play. ✓

The Oedipus Complex, created by Sigmund Freud, is the theory of which a child has developed feelings of desire for the opposite sex parent. <sup>*cite*</sup> This complex was first proposed in 1899, but was not formally used until 1910 ("What is the Oedipus Complex?"). In Greek Mythology, Oedipus is abandoned at birth thus, not knowing who his parents are. It is after he had killed his father and married his mother, that he then finds out who they really are ("What is the Oedipus Complex?"). This complex or theory occurs in the phallic stage of psychosexual development, which is between the ages three and five. This is the stage that serves the most important point in forming sexual development ("What is the Oedipus Complex?"). With the feelings of desire for the opposite-sex parent, comes competition with the same-sex parent. A boy feels as if he is competing with his father for the possession of his mother ("What is the Oedipus Complex?"). As sign of this could involve a boy expressing possessiveness towards his

mother and telling his father not to hug or kiss her. In order to resolve this, the defense mechanism of identification must kick in (<sup>slang</sup> "What is the Oedipus Complex?"). If not resolved, a fixation develops and the child either becomes "mother-fixated" or "father-fixated" and this could cause the child to seek out romantic partners that resemble their opposite-sex parent as adults ("What is the Oedipus Complex?"). These signs of the complex can be seen in the relationship that Hamlet and his mother, Gertrude share. ✓

Hamlet portrays what Sigmund Freud calls the Oedipus or Oedipal Complex and when the relationship between he and his mother is brought up, it comes to mind. Hamlet is furious with the re-marriage between his mother and his uncle, as he believes that it is incestuous (1.2.156-157). Aspects of the <sup>C</sup> complex can be seen in Hamlet's first soliloquy, where he reveals his personal expression of pain and suffering derived from the re-marriage ("Hamlet's Relationship with His Mother"). Hamlet explains, "It is not, nor it cannot come to, good; But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue!" (1.2.158-159). He shows this pain of holding his tongue for feelings he desires towards his mother and how upset he is that she has married again so soon. He feels as if she never had feelings for his father, thus causing her to marry the <sup>slang</sup> next guy in line, which happened to be his uncle and only one month after the death of his father ("Hamlet's Relationship with His Mother"). Further into the play, Hamlet confronts Gertrude about how he feels and yells and rants to her about his feelings towards Claudius and their marriage (3.4). During this, <sup>slang</sup> he makes constant sexual allusions and shows too much emotion towards her ("Does Hamlet Display the Oedipus Complex?"). He compares his dad to a sun god and Claudius to a mildew'd ear and says, "Here is your husband; a mildew'd ear,

Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?

Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,

And batten on this moor? Ha! Have you eyes?

You cannot call it love, for at your age, <sup>p</sup> (3.4.66-70)

Hamlet wants her to realize that she has made a mistake by marrying someone like Claudius. He also tells her that she is too old to be having sex and that she should not be having sex with Claudius at all (3.4.93-96). *not needed* Here is just one sign of the Oedipus Complex. Hamlet is telling his mother not to have sexual relations with his father figure, as he wants the love and attention of his mother to himself ("Does Hamlet Display the Oedipus Complex"?). This desire for sexual relations towards his mother, causes tension and rivalry to arise between he and Claudius.

Throughout the play, Hamlet and Gertrude's bond causes tension, competition and rivalry to be formed between Hamlet and his new father, Claudius. When speaking of Claudius, Hamlet uses decayed imagery and language choices to describe him, thus showing the hatred he has. Hamlet compares Claudius to his father by saying, "So excellent, a king; that was, to this, Hyperion to a Satyr." (1.2.139-140). Here he explains how god-like his father was and how lewd and promiscuous Claudius is. It is at the beginning of the play that Hamlet finds out from his father's ghost that it was Claudius who killed his father (1.5.10-20). *S* Ever since finding out, Hamlet has the idea that he must avenge his father's death by killing Claudius (1.5.75-80). While the ghost is telling Hamlet how he died, he reminds him to leave his mother alone and out of his plan as God will punish her if she has anything to do with it (1.5.87-90). This shows Hamlet's love and compassion towards his mother as he knows that if she has anything to do with his plan of killing Claudius, she would go to Hell when she deserves to go to Heaven. Hamlet has this *awkward* hatred and death sentence for Claudius through the entirety of the play and has full intentions of killing him. While Claudius is praying for forgiveness in regards to murdering his brother, Hamlet decides that this is going to be the best time to end his life. However, he chooses not to as for if he does it while Claudius is praying, his soul will go to Heaven, when it deserves to go to Hell, not only for killing his brother, but for marrying his own sister-in-law (3.3.80-96). Hamlet is not the only one who has the desire to kill. Claudius wants to kill Hamlet, as he too wants the power and love of Gertrude to himself so; he decides that he is going to

send Hamlet to England to be killed (4.3.60-68). After circumstances involving Hamlet not being killed in England, Laertes and Claudius come up with two ways of killing Hamlet to make it look like an accident. The first one being that they are going to dip the end of a fencing sword in poison then scratch him, and the second being that they are going to poison Hamlet's wine (4.7.140-160). This competition of killing one another for power and the love of Gertrude leaves all of them dead in the end (5.2). The tension and rivalry between Claudius and Hamlet is just one example how the Oedipus Complex is affecting one relationship between characters in the play. The relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia is another relationship affected by the complex and how Hamlet treats and views her.

The complex also shows how Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia is only a substitute for the one he desires with his mother and how he views and treats women in general. The madness running through Hamlet's mind is brought out when he seems to know that Ophelia is helping Claudius and Polonius spy on him because they assume that she is the reason Hamlet has gone mad in the first place ("Ophelia in Hamlet"). After Hamlet's famous soliloquy, "to be, or not to be," he sees Ophelia and contradicts his love for her (3.1.57). He says to her, "Get thee to a nunnery, go; farewell, or if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them." (3.1.137-140). Hamlet claims to never have loved her and that she should go to a nunnery, that way she could never have sex and says if she were to marry, she would make a monster of them (3.1.114-140). This shows no remorse or love for Ophelia even though in that scene he claims to have loved her once. If that is not hurtful enough, Hamlet also calls Ophelia a slut and a whore because during the time Shakespeare wrote this play, girls who wore makeup were prostitutes (3.1.143-145). His view towards Ophelia is what causes her to go mad herself. The loss of affection from Hamlet and the death

of her father has said to be the reason for her suicide ("Ophelia in Hamlet"). Act 4, scene 7, is <sup>when</sup> where Ophelia falls into the river while singing and dancing and lets the water take over her. It is a passive suicide, showing that she accepted the fact that she was <sup>dying</sup> dying. After Hamlet finds out that Ophelia has died, he tells everyone that he did indeed love her. However, it is only after she is dead, <sup>that</sup> that he shows his true feelings and confesses his love for her (5.1.263-265, 269-278).  
 Hamlet's love for Gertrude causes him to go mad and treat other women and personal relationships with disrespect. His madness in desiring more than just a mother, son relationship, leads to struggles in his personal relationships. ✓

In conclusion, Hamlet's relationship between he and Gertrude lead to emotional outbursts and negative effects towards other characters in the <sup>play</sup> play. He wants full possession of his mother and believes that her marriage with Claudius is incestuous. Simply, he is jealous and wants revenge on Claudius for marrying his mother and killing <sup>his</sup> his father. It also explains how he views women in general and that his personal relationship with Ophelia was only a substitute for the one he desired with his mother. ✓ The relationship of Hamlet and Gertrude can be seen through the lens of Sigmund Freud's Oedipus Complex and leads one to see the effect it has involving Hamlet's relationship with others throughout <sup>the</sup> the play. *Connection to society?*

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## Sample: Explaining Your Writing Variables

Day 2 or 3



### Explaining Your Writing Variables

Explain how the writing variables you identified on page x fit together to make an effective plan for your written text.

5 marks

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Sigmund Freud's Oedipus Complex is a theory of which a child has feelings of desire for the opposite sex parent. One can see that the relationship between Hamlet and his mother is related to this complex and how it effects Hamlet's relationships with other characters. Psychology students could use this essay to analyze Hamlet's character and the relationship shared with his mother. It is in essay form found in a psychology textbook because students studying psychology can use Hamlet and Gertrude as an example of the Oedipus complex and how that effects other characters just how the complex effects other people in real life dealing with this complex first hand. This is also in essay form because it splits up how the oedipus complex effects Hamlet's relationships specifically with Claudius and Ophelia throughout the play. Psychology students would be interested in reading this because it shows one example of the oedipus complex and how the complex has major effects not only on the individual, but on the others in that individuals life as well.