

Applying the tragic hero of Hamlet through the theoretical framework of Aristotle and Freytag

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Abstract

William Shakespeare's "Hamlet," written around 1600, is one of the most famous tragedies in the English language. The play is rich in themes such as revenge, madness, mortality, and the complexity of the human condition .

This paper analyzes the dramatic structure using Freytag's pyramid and Aristotle tragedy theory as a framework .They examine the play's exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, and conflict combining with Aristotle theory to understand how Shakespeare constructs a powerful tragedy .The method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative, which aims to analyzing and collecting data from the play and some referential books, library ,websites and other data sources that were useful for the analysis.The study also explores the significance of Hamlet in literary studies .The results of the study have pedagogical implications for teaching English literature for students and language learners .

Key words: Hamlet ,Aristotle theory, Freytag pyramid, tragedy drama.

تطبيق النظرية التراجيدية لمسرحية هاملت من خلال الإطار النظري لأرسطو وهرم فريتاج

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الملخص:

تعد مسرحية هاملت لوليام شكسبير التي كتبت حوالي عام 1600, واحدة من أشهر المسرحيات التراجيدية في اللغة الانجليزية. المسرحية غنية بمواضيع مثل الانتقام، واجنون، والفناء وتعقيد الحالة الانسانية. تحلل هذه الورقة البحثية البنية الدرامية للمسرحية باستخدام هرم فريتاج ونظرية أرسطو التراجيدية كإطار عمل. وتدرس عرض المسرحية، والحادثة المحرصة، والفعل الصاعد، والذروة، والحل الهابط، والصراع مع الجمع بين نظرية أرسطو لفهم كيف يبني شكسبير مأساة قوية. والمنهج المستخدم في هذه الدراسة هو المنهج الوصفي الكيفي الذي يهدف الى تحليل وجمع البيانات من المسرحية وبعض الكتب المرجعية والمكتبة والمواقع الالكترونية ومصادر البيانات الأخرى التي كانت مفيدة للتحليل، كما تستكشف الدراسة أهمية مسرحية هاملت في الدراسات الأدبية. نتائج الدراسة لها اثار تربوية في تدريس الأدب الانجليزي للطلاب ومتعلمي اللغة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: هاملت. نظرية ارسطو. هرم فريتاج. الدراما التراجيدية.

1-Introduction

According to Roberts and Jacobs (1989:1) state that literature refers to written (and also spoken) composition to tell stories, dramatize situation and some thought and emotion, and also, more importantly to interest, entertain, stimulate, broaden, and ennoble readers .

Literature is classified into the following genres : prose fiction, poetry, and drama. Valency (1975:333) defined drama is a form of literature which is made in the purpose to be performed by actors on a stage .Drama may focus on a single character or small number of characters, and it present fictional events , to be witnessed by a group of people composing on audience.

One of the greatest English dramatists in all of literature is William Shakespeare.

He was the great English playwright in the Elizabethan period .He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England on 23rd April 1564 ,the son of tradesman , John Shakespeare.His mother was the daughter of a farmer. It seemed that he got a good education.

.However, there is evidence that the family decreased and that Shakespeare was not able to complete his school. He married Anne Hathaway at age 18 in November 1582.

They had Susannaand twins named Hamnet and Judith.

Hamnet died at the age of eleven ,which deeply affected Shakespeare.He wrote approximately 39 plays, 154 sonnets, and several other poems. His works include tragedies like Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth. He returned to Stratford around 1613 and lived there until his death on April 23, 1616¹.

It is considered that the drama Hamlet was written around 1602 .It is based on the legend of Amleth . It is said that the story was similar to the Spanish tragedy by Thomas Kyd . There are many well-known quotations in Hamlet. Many of which are still used in English language today .

¹ William Shakespeare Biography (<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/shakespedia/william-shakespeare/william-shakespeare-biography>.)

Hamlet is a tragedy that explores deep themes of revenge, madness, and the moral complexities of human existence. The play is set in the Kingdom of Denmark. The story begins with Prince Hamlet meeting the ghost of his deceased father, King Hamlet. The ghost reveals that he was murdered by his own brother, Claudius, who has now taken the throne and married Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude. The ghost implores Hamlet to avenge his death.

1.1-Aim of Study

The primary aim of this study is to analyze the dramatic structure of Hamlet to expose how Shakespeare creates his tragedy. It examines how the narrative elements and character are constructed to create emotional impact, themes and carry out the Aristotelian concept of catharsis.

1.2-Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

Q1. What is Freytag's pyramid and how does Shakespeare use it to structure Hamlet plot ?

Q2. What is Aristotle's theory of tragedy and how has it helped to analyse and developed a deep understanding of Shakespeare's Hamlet ?

1.3-The Importance of the study

This research presents many advantages for readers, as well as students and educators of English literature. It provides valuable insights into literature, the playwright's narrative structure, and the stylistic approaches used during that period. Teachers can use Hamlet play as a teaching tool, as it helps the practice of reading, engaging in discussions about creative works, and introducing literary concepts, genres, and terminology. This study is beneficial not only for casual readers and students but also for those seeking a brief and comprehensive summary of the play. The purpose of this research is to provide information regarding the plot.

As one of Shakespeare's most known works, "Hamlet" holds a favored place in the literary work, serving as a reference for explorations of tragedy, revenge, and the complexities of the human experience.

2-Theoretical Background to the study

William Shakespeare's Hamlet is a quintessential example of Elizabethan tragedy, drawing on classical and Renaissance traditions. Hamlet" is based on the legend of Amleth, a story found in Scandinavian folklore. Shakespeare adapted this tale to explore themes of revenge and the complexities of human emotion .The story with all the basic plot lines found in Shakespeare's play.

The play is known for its rich characterizations, particularly that of Hamlet, who is often seen as a model of the modern tragic hero .From Philosophical Analysis angel , Hamlet's soliloquies, especially "To be, or not to be," are often analyzed for their philosophical content, exploring themes of existence ,self-hood ,and the nature of reality .In addition ,the symbols and signs in Hamlet examine how they contribute to the play's meaning. For instance, the using of death and decay themes (e.g., Yorick's skull, the ghost, the graveyard scene) is analyzed for its symbolic significance.

For more illustration, Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, developed his concepts of tragedy in his work "Poetics", provides a theoretical framework for understanding the structure and impact of tragic works. According to Aristotle, a tragedy is a serious narrative that depicts the fall of a noble hero due to a combination of a tragic flaw (hamartia), a reversal of fortune (peripeteia), and a moment of recognition (anagnorisis), achieve in the evocation of pity and fear and leading to a catharsis for the audience(Aristotl.1902) .

.1The Tragic Hero (hamartia)

Aristotle's tragic hero is a person of noble birth with exceptional qualities, but they possess a fatal flaw that leads to their downfall (Poetics, Chapter 13).

.2Peripeteia (Reversal of Fortune)

Aristotle describes peripeteia as a sudden reversal of circumstances that alters the hero's fortune from good to bad (Poetics, Chapter 11).

.3Anagnorisis (Recognition or Discovery)

Anagnorisis is the moment of critical discovery where the hero gains insight into their situation (Poetics, Chapter 11).

.4Catharsis

Catharsis, as defined by Aristotle, is the purging of emotions, particularly pity and fear, through the audience's engagement with the tragedy (Poetics, Chapter 6).

.5The Unity of Plot

Aristotle emphasized the need for a coherent and unified plot (Poetics, Chapter 7).

.6The Inevitability of Fate

For Aristotle, a tragedy often portrays fate combined with human error (Poetics, Chapter 9).

From another angle, (Gustav Freytag , (1863 a 19th-century German novelist, developed a model of plot structure known as Freytag's Pyramid ,provides a useful model for analyse Hamlet's five-act structure. This pyramid identifies the exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

-1Exposition: The introduction of the setting, characters, and basic situation. This part provides the background information needed to understand the story.

-2The initial incident is the event or decision that begins the story's main conflict. It disrupts the protagonist's normal life and sets the plot in motion, leading to the rising action.The importance of the Initial Incident is introduction to Conflict.

-3Rising Action: A series of events and conflicts that lead to the story's climax. This part builds tension and develops the plot through complications and challenges faced by the characters.

-4Climax: The turning point and the moment of greatest tension in the story. It is the peak of the story where the main conflict reaches its highest point.

-5Falling Action: Events that follow the climax and start to resolve the conflict. This part leads towards the closure of the story by addressing the aftermath of the climax.

-6Resolution (Denouement): The conclusion of the story, where conflicts are resolved, and the narrative comes to a satisfying end. Loose ends are tied up, and the story reaches its final outcome.(Gustav Freytag(1863

From these theoretical frameworks, combining Aristotle's principles of tragedy with Freytag's Pyramid offers a rich framework to analyze Hamlet. Aristotle defines tragedy as a dramatic composition that arouses pity and fear, leading to catharsis, while Freytag's Pyramid maps the plot structural of a tragedy. Shakespeare's Hamlet fits this model with Aristotle's key principles.

According to Aristotle, a tragic hero possesses hamartia, which refers to a tragic flaw. Freytag's pyramid for dramatic structure includes elements: Introduction or Exposition, initial incident, Rising Action, Climax or Crisis, Falling Action, and Conclusion. When we apply Aristotle's idea of hamartia to Freytag's pyramid, it becomes evident that the falling action in the play stems from the protagonist's tragic flaw. Similarly, the main characters in Shakespeare's tragedies also exhibit hamartia. The tragic flaws found in the protagonist is Hamlet's procrastination .The narrative structures of this plays is crafted to ensure that the protagonist face his downfall due to his tragic flaw. Later on, the analysis of hamlet with these frameworks will explain .

3-Method

3.1-Research designe

This study employs a qualitative research design, focusing on textual analysis of Hamlet to examine its structural components. Freytag's pyramid and Aristotle theory are used as the theoretical frameworks for categorizing the play's dramatic elements. The research aims to clarify how these frameworks contribute to the play's thematic and emotional depth.

3.2-The Data

The primary text for analysis is William Shakespeare's Hamlet (1600-1601). Secondary sources include critical essays,books, scholarly articles, and theoretical works on Shakespearean tragedy and dramatic structure.

3.3-Analysis procedure

The play is divided into its five acts, with each act analyzed according to Freytag's pyramid and Aristotle theory . Key aspect are identified to illustrate how Shakespeare employs dramatic functions such as exposition, climax, and resolution. Conflict and thematic elements are also examined within this framework. The findings are then synthesized to draw conclusions about the overall impact of the dramatic structure on the play's themes and understanding.

4-Functional analysis

As a result of combining Aristotle's theory of tragedy with Freytag's Pyramid provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing Shakespeare's Hamlet. Here's how Hamlet fits into both frameworks. Below, the research gave detail how these two models apply to the play, referencing specific elements from the text.

4.1-Aristotle Theory

Aristotle, in Poetics , outlines six elements of tragedy: plot, character, thought, diction, song, and spectacle. He emphasizes the importance of the plot and identifies key concepts like the tragic hero, hamartia (tragic flaw), peripeteia (reversal of fortune), anagnorisis (recognition), and catharsis (emotional purgation). These ideas correspond well with Hamlet:

a. Tragic Hero and Hamartia

Hamlet is the quintessential tragic hero, a noble character who falls due to his tragic flaw: indecision. His inability to act decisively when presented with the task of avenging his father's murder delays the resolution and leads to the tragic outcomes for himself and others.

Example: Hamlet's hesitation to kill Claudius when the opportunity arises, due to his moral and philosophical quality , illustrates his hamartia , This can also seen in his soliloquies (e.g., "To be or not to be").

b. Peripeteia (Reversal)

A sudden reversal of fortune to worst for the protagonist. The turning point occurs in Act III, Scene IV, when Hamlet accidentally kills Polonius. This

action triggers a chain of events leading to Ophelia's madness and death, Laertes' revengeful return, and eventually Hamlet's own death.

Hamlet experiences several reversals of fortune throughout the play.

- Example: The play-within-a-play, "The Mousetrap," confirms Claudius's guilt but also sets off a chain of events that lead to Hamlet's downfall.

c. Anagnorisis (Recognition)

Hamlet's anagnorisis is subtle but appears in Act V, Scene II, during his conversation with Horatio:

"There is a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will".

Here, Hamlet seems to accept fate, recognizing the limits of human control and embracing his role in the tragic unfolding of events.

Hamlet has moments of profound self-realization and recognition of his situation.

- Example: The graveyard scene where Hamlet reflects on mortality, holding Yorick's skull, symbolizes his confrontation with the inevitability of death and the futility of life.

d. Catharsis (Emotional Purging)

The audience experiences catharsis at the play's conclusion. The deaths of Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, and Laertes resolve the moral and emotional tension, leaving the audience to reflect on themes of justice, revenge, and mortality.

4.2-Freytag's Pyramid in Hamlet

Freytag's Pyramid divides the dramatic structure into parts: exposition, initial incident, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Hamlet follows through this structure.

4.2.1-Exposition (Act I)

While Baldick (2001) refers to exposition as "the opening part of play or a story, in which we are introduced to the characters and their situations, often by reference to preceding events".

The beginning scenes or the exposition of Hamlet describe the setting (the royal court of Denmark), the main characters (Hamlet, King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia and Laertes) and the main conflict (the death of King Hamlet). The play begins with the entry of the ghost of Hamlet's father. This imparts the dramatic quality. In Act 1, Scene 1, we see the guards, Marcellus and Horatio talk about a ghost they see, which shows us that there is political conflict in Denmark after the death of the king. In Act 1, Scene 5, the ghost tells Hamlet he was killed by Claudius. This incident created the main situation of the play that is Hamlet's struggle to take revenge on his uncle Claudius for the throne and Gertrude.

4.2.2- Initial incident (Act I)

The inciting incident of "Hamlet" occurs in Act 1, Scene 5, when the ghost reveals to Hamlet that he was murdered by Claudius. The ghost demands that Hamlet avenge his murder by killing Claudius, setting the revenge plot in motion.

4.2.3-Rising Action (Acts II and III)

Hamlet's internal conflict contributes to the rising actions, as well as the events that lead up to the climax. Hamlet's first hesitation to act is shown through the soliloquies – the famous one "To be, or not to be" in Act 3 Scene 1, where he thinks about existing and acting. This speech shows how Hamlet is confused about his existence and how he thinks what life is. As the play goes on, Hamlet pretends to be mad to check Claudius's guilt .

Hamlet's act complicates relationship with everyone, especially Ophelia, who loves him but is met with confusion and rejection. In Acts 2 and 3, we witness Hamlet and Ophelia's interactions that highlights madness and politics. Similarly, this highlights Polonius' and King Claudius' interference in Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship. A big moment in the rising action is in Act 3 Scene 2 when "The Mousetrap" gets performed. Hamlet uses it to find out whether Claudius is guilty of killing King Hamlet. Claudius' sudden exit confirms Hamlet's worries and raises tensions as Hamlet decides to confront Claudius.

4.2.4-. Climax (Act III, Scene IV)

Hamlet's climax is said to fall when he reaches Act 3 Scene 3 when he can kill Claudius while he prays. Hamlet, however, does not do this because he says if he kills Claudius while praying, Claudius will go to heaven, which he imperfect revenge. In this moment, Hamlet's internal struggle and moral dilemmas become clear, as he contemplates the nature of revenge and justice. This decision is the most critical in the plot because it causes Hamlet not to act; since his decision, almost every main character dies in a chain of events. The climax is when Hamlet could have put an end to the series of revenge and tragedy and didn't

4.2.5-. Falling Action (Acts IV and V)

The falling action of "Hamlet" unfolds after the climax, characterized by increasing tension and tragic events. The accidental killing of Polonius by Hamlet in Act 3, Scene 4, marks a critical turning point, as it increases the conflict between Hamlet and Claudius and causes Ophelia into madness. Ophelia's motion into insanity, illustrated in Act 4, Scene 5, emphasizes the play's themes of madness.

Additionally, Claudius's plotting against Hamlet becomes more noticeable. He invents a plan to send Hamlet to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, intending to have him killed.

Laertes' return in Act 4, Scene 5, wanting revenge for his father's death, complicates things even more. Laertes partnership with Claudius is an important plot point. Revenge is one of the main themes in the play Hamlet. Laertes and Hamlet become mere pawns in Claudius's plans as tensions build and relationships turn antagonistic.

4.2.6-Resolution (Act V)

The resolution of "Hamlet" is marked by the tragic conclusion: the duel results in the deaths of Hamlet, Laertes, Gertrude, and Claudius. Fortinbras arrives to take control of the kingdom, declare the end of the Danish royal origin and the resolution of the plot.

The resolution of "Hamlet" is marked by the tragic culmination of events in the final act. The fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes in Act 5, Scene

2, serves as the climax of the play and brings together the various threads of revenge, betrayal, and fate. Claudius, in a desperate attempt to kill Hamlet, has poisoned the tip of Laertes's sword and prepared a poisoned drink for Hamlet. The duel is an example of the larger conflicts at play, as it encloses the themes of revenge, mortality, and the consequences of action. Hamlet finally kills Claudius, ensuring that the cycle of violence is completed.

4.2.7-Conflict

Conflict is at the heart of "Hamlet," driving the narrative and shaping the characters' destinies. The play features both external and internal conflicts that reflect the complexity of human emotion and moral dilemmas. The primary external conflict is between Hamlet and Claudius, representing the struggle between good and evil.

Hamlet's internal conflict—his hesitation to act on the ghost's demand for revenge—symbolize the struggle between thought and action. The conflict between logical reasoning and emotional reaction is a persistent theme in the play, leading to Hamlet's tragic end.

5-Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1-Conclusion

To summarize, Aristotle's concepts explain the emotional depth and moral complexity of the play. Freytag's Pyramid maps the progression of events, highlighting how Shakespeare mixes action and reflection to build tension.

By applying Aristotle's tragedy theory and Freytag's Pyramid, the research is gained insight into the complex structure of "Hamlet." The interplay of Hamlet's tragic flaws, the important moments of recognition and reversal, and the clear progress. Through Freytag's stages illustrate the play's exploration of themes such as revenge, morality, and the human condition. This dual analysis improve understanding of Shakespeare's tragedy.

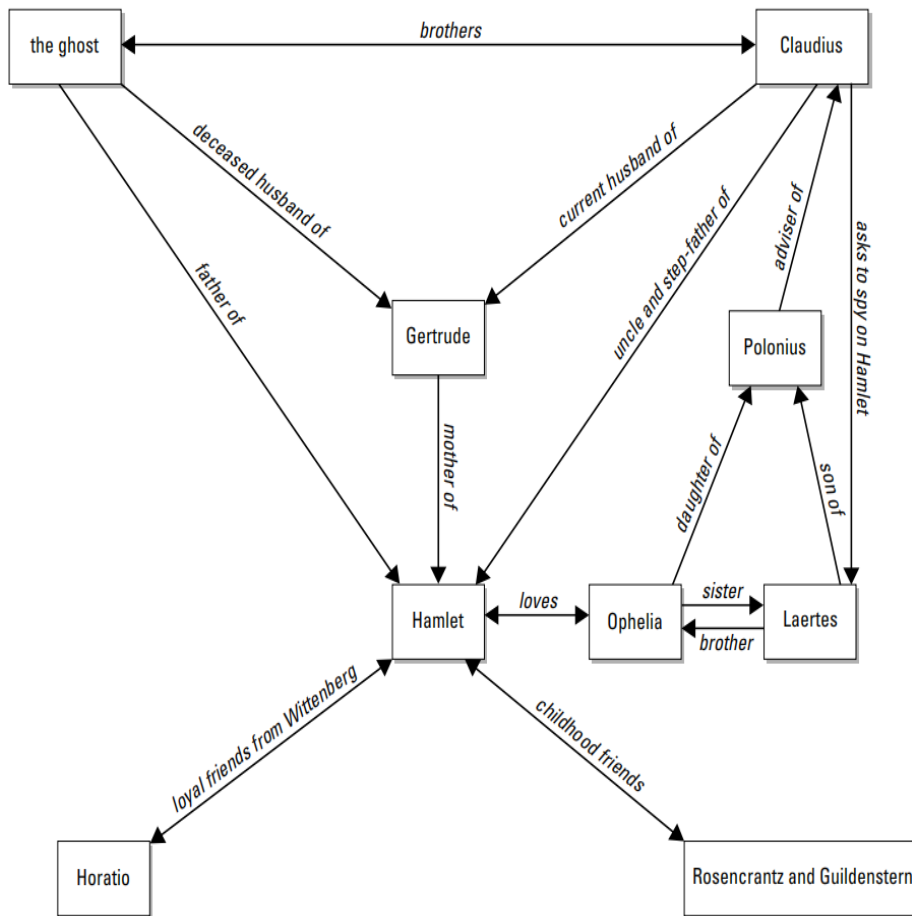
5.2-Recommendation

Future research could explore various adaptations of "Hamlet" in different cultural contexts, examining how the play's themes resonate across time and space. Additionally, a comparative analysis of "Hamlet" with other

Shakespearean tragedies, such as "Macbeth" and "Othello," could yield insights into recurring themes and structural similarities within Shakespeare's oeuvre.

Moreover, a deeper investigation into the psychological dimensions of the characters, particularly Hamlet and Ophelia, could enhance our understanding of the play's exploration of madness and moral ambiguity. By examining the psychological motivations behind their actions, scholars could contribute to a richer interpretation of the play's themes.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY



²CliffsComplete Shakespeare's Hamlet. Commentary by T. Mategrano, Ph.D.

² Lamb, S. (ed.), 2000. CliffsComplete Shakespeare's Hamlet. Commentary by T. Mategrano, Ph.D. New York, NY; Cleveland, OH; Indianapolis, IN: Best-Selling Books, Digital Downloads, e-Books,

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William Shakespeare | Plays, Poems, Biography, Quotes, & Facts | Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Shakespeare>)