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Hamlet Essay Kit #8: The Themes of Deception and Appearance versus Reality (Hamlet Essay Kits)

Brendan Munnelly

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You have the rest of your life to appreciate Shakespeare's *Hamlet* - but only a few hours to finish that essay!

Ready and waiting for you in *The Themes of Deception and Appearance versus Reality* from the **Hamlet Essay Kit** series are:

- 3 x 1,500-word full sample essays
- 6 x easy-to-rewrite sections in each sample essay
- 18 x combinations of sections to mix and match
- 72 x supporting quotations from the play

Here are some short samples from the three 1,500-word essays about appearance and reality in *Hamlet*:

1 - INTRODUCTION
When *"The actors come hither"* in Act II-II, they arrive at an Elsinore where two theatrical performances are already in progress. One is a crown and queen-grab, directed by and staring the usurping Claudius. The second is a one-man show of madness, written and performed by his nephew, Prince Hamlet. Shakespeare's play is an extended pun on the verb 'to act': to take action, and to perform a false role.

2 - CLAUDIUS: THE REAL YET FALSE KING
The playwright of Providence cast Claudius as a secondary character in the shadow of his brother, King Hamlet. But Claudius rewrites the script so that he now occupies center stage. It is not only Hamlet who is unconvinced by Claudius' fitness to play the king: Norway's Young Fortinbras, *"Holding a weak supposal of our worth"* (Act I-II), is threatening Denmark's borders.

3 - POLONIUS: *"SEEING, UNSEEN"*
The king's chief advisor uses a spy Reynaldo to spread malicious lies about Laertes – *"Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth"* (Act II-I). He also directs Ophelia to stumble across the prince *"as 'twere by accident"* (Act III-I), while he and the king listen nearby, *"seeing, unseen"*. Polonius, who in life so enjoyed acting as someone he was not, meets his death because he is mistaken for someone else.

4 - HAMLET: THE PLAYER PRINCE
Like his creator, Prince Hamlet is an actor (*"I perchance hereafter shall ... To put an antic disposition on"* - Act I-V) and playwright (*"The play's the thing Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king"* - Act II-II). He is also a harsh critic of the other characters' insincere performances. But his words and theatrics are not enough to unseat Claudius from the throne or remove Gertrude from his side.

5 - PAINTED WORDS AND PAINTED DEEDS
The motif of painting repeatedly reinforces the theme of false appearances concealing hidden truths. In Act III-I Claudius compares the *"painted word"* of his kingship the *"harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art."* In the graveyard scene Hamlet observes that death will triumph over all disguises: *"Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come* (Act V-I).

6 - CONCLUSION: *"WHO'S THERE?"*

"Who's there?" asks the castle guard Barnardo as midnight approaches in Act I-I. His question is met with a counter-demand from his colleague, Francesco: *"Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself"*. Ironically, the watchful sentinels were looking in the wrong direction. Denmark was not conquered by an external foe; it collapsed under a web of domestic deception.

>>> With this book you'll very quickly be expressing your own thoughts about what 'seems' and what 'is' in *Hamlet*, in your own individual way and personal writing style.

The Themes of Deception and Appearance and versus is from the **Hamlet Essay Kit** series at www.essaykit.com - simply the most sanity-saving, grade-boosting and deadline-beating way of appreciating the greatness of Shakespeare's greatest play.

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