

## Evidence in Hamlet of How Gertrude Feels About Hamlet

In my attempt to discover how Gertrude really feels about Hamlet, I determined that Gertrude loves her son Hamlet in a motherly fashion. Almost everything Gertrude says or does in the play supports this theory, and there is no contradictory evidence. However, since Gertrude's role in connection to Hamlet is not large, it is possible to analyze every shred of evidence in this meager report.

Gertrude's care for Hamlet is evident from her first lines in Act 1, wherein she begs Hamlet to "cast [his] nighted color off" in an attempt to bring him out of two months of mourning. This shows her love for him in that she is concerned about his emotional state and desires for him to continue his growth as a person. Later that Scene, Gertrude beseeches Hamlet to "not go back to Wittenberg," his university. She desires his company as she loves him and so wants him to remain with her in the palace. In the next Act, Gertrude asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern "instantly to visit [her] too much changed son" in order that they might discover the cause of his seeming insanity. This shows that Gertrude is concerned about her son's health and is willing to take action to discover and help fix his problems, further evidence of her motherly love. Later that Scene, Gertrude refers to Hamlet as a "poor wretch," showing her pity and concern for him. She tries everything she can think of to help bring Hamlet out of his madness, including the use of his former flame, Ophelia, who Gertrude hopes "will bring him to his wonted way again." Gertrude is attempting desperately to return Hamlet to sanity because she loves her son. In the next Scene, right before the players begin their performance of *The Murder of Gonzago* or *The Mousetrap*, Gertrude requests that her "dear Hamlet" come sit by him, because she enjoys the company of her son and wants him to feel welcome. She also hopes that her close chaperonage might allow her to prevent any embarrassing behavior. After the play and Claudius' enragement, Gertrude calls Hamlet to her parlor and tells him that he has "much offended" Claudius. This is her attempt to discipline Hamlet for his misbehavior and to prevent further trouble with Claudius, whose punishment for Hamlet she fears might be harsher than hers. Through this it is evident that Gertrude is acting like a mother to punish and protect her child. Gertrude further chastises Hamlet when, in "a rash and bloody deed," he kills Polonius. Again Gertrude is showing her desire to protect Hamlet from harsher consequences and to head-off future trouble. In loving Hamlet, Gertrude is vulnerable to him, and she reveals this when she begs for "no more, sweet Hamlet," when he reveals to her the gravity of her decision to marry Claudius soon after the death of Hamlet's father and her former husband, King Hamlet. She does this because she cannot stand to be criticized by her beloved son, and because she does not want to believe her sin against him and his father. Later that Scene, when Hamlet sees his father's ghost, Gertrude once again fears that, "alas, he's mad." She is still worried about her son and desires for him to become sane once again. Still later, after the ghost has left, she tells Hamlet that he has "cleft [her] heart in twain," because her love for him equals her love for her new husband, so her loyalty is split between them. However, she does keep her word to Hamlet when Claudius questions her in the next Scene, not revealing to Hamlet's enemy that he is only pretending to be crazy, and also giving Hamlet a sense of remorse for Polonius' death in telling Claudius that "a weeps for what is done."

Gertrude does this both to protect her son and, like any good mother, to portray him in the best light possible. Gertrude is busy with other matters until Act 5, when Hamlet scuffles with Laertes, and she shouts "Hamlet, Hamlet!" This shows her maternal reflex, where nothing really matters to her except that her son is misbehaving in public and, as his mother, she wishes to stop him and scold him. She also defends her son after the fight is over, begging her husband that "for love of God [he] forbear him." She is still trying to protect from harsh punishment, as any loving mother would. So, Gertrude tries to make up for Hamlet's misbehavior by expressing to him her wish for Hamlet "to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes," in other words, to apologize to him. She wants her son to take responsibility for his actions and to learn to behave properly. During the final, fatal fencing match, Gertrude rejoices in Hamlet's thus-far success and offers him her napkin. She is happy at her son's victory and tries to take care of him physically, as any mother would. Finally, with her dying breath, Gertrude makes a sacrifice and warns Hamlet of the poisoned drink.