

Evidence that Hamlet and Laertes are similar

Quotes and analysis:

1. Act I, Scene ii, 51

Act I, Scene ii, 113

“ Laertes rather be in France than in Denmark

“ Hamlet wants to go back to school in Wittenberg

“ Neither of them wants to stay in Denmark, which foreshadows the "rotten" state it will become.

2. Act IV, Scene v, 135

Act III, Scene iii, 75

“ Laertes wishes to avenge his father's death

“ Hamlet also wants to avenge his father's mysterious death

“ Both of their fathers were murdered and, being male, they felt a need to avenge their deaths.

3. Act IV, Scene vii, 1-163

Act II, Scene ii, 617

“ Laertes makes plans with Claudius to kill Hamlet

“ Hamlet makes plans to reveal Claudius's nature

“ They are both conniving.

4. Act V, Scene i, 251

Act V, Scene i, 271

“ Laertes loved his sister, Ophelia

“ Hamlet claims he loved Ophelia

“ Their feelings toward Ophelia are simply ways Shakespeare reveals how Laertes feels about Hamlet (I, iii,1-44) and how deep Hamlet is in his plan (as to tell her to get to a nunnery (III, i,121) though he claims to love her).

5. Act V, Scene ii, 106

Act IV, Scene vii, 18

“ Laertes is considered an absolute gentleman by the public

“ The public loves their Prince

“ Because they are both of noble blood, the comparison is more meaningful. If Laertes was a mere peasant, comparing him to the likes of a Prince would be unparalleled.

6. Act IV, Scene v, 130-136

Act V, Scene ii, 323

“ Once Laertes hears of his father's murder, he acts quickly

“ When given the chance, Hamlet kills the King without thinking

“ Laertes has been rash from the beginning but towards the end, Hamlet too becomes rash (Shakespeare is trying to strengthen their similarities).

7. Act IV, Scene vii, 106-109

Act I, Scene ii, 76-86

“ Laertes is taken aback and insulted when Claudius asks him if he cared about his father. He obviously loved him very much.

“ Hamlet is not putting forth a façade; he really is sad over his father's death and continues to mourn 2 months later.

“ Both men loved their fathers and want to avenge their unnatural deaths.

8. Act V, Scene i, 280

“ They are fighting to prove their masculinity.

“ Upon poor Ophelia's grave, they are fighting over who loved her more. Not only are they selfish, they also want to outdo each other in everything they do (perhaps because they are so similar).

The main theme in Hamlet is revenge. Although Hamlet and Laertes are both seeking revenge, they go about it differently. Because they are in the same situation, they can be compared to one another. Shakespeare probably created the retaliatory Laertes in order to make the reader or audience side with Hamlet, the protagonist. By comparing him to the rash Laertes, the author forces the reader to appreciate the careful thought that goes into Hamlet's every move (until towards the end when he too becomes rash).

They are both high-class males placed in strenuous positions. Without Laertes, the audience would have no one else to compare Hamlet to, other than Fortinbras, who rarely appears. Laertes is almost the standard to which Shakespeare wants his audience to compare the Prince to. Comparing the two almost intensifies their different characteristics.