

Ophelia's Feelings for Hamlet

Act I, scene iii
Act I, scene iii, lines 110-111
Act I, scene iii, lines 113-114
Act I, scene iii, line 136
Act II, scene i
Act II, scene i, lines 83-84
Act II, scene i, line 86
Act II, scene i, lines 109-110
Act III, scene i
Act III, scene i, lines 93-95
Act III, scene i, lines 96-102
Act III, scene i, line 158
Act III, scene i, line 159

Love

In the beginning of the play, Ophelia does love Hamlet. In Act I, scene iii, when her father and brother try to convince her of Hamlet's improper intent, she seems focus on how honorable and convincing he had appeared to be in his declarations of love. Ophelia is convinced of his good intentions and tries to convince her father. When her father tells her she is foolish to believe Hamlet, Ophelia says that his declarations of love were in an "honorable fashion" (I, iii, 111). When her father still expresses disbelief, she tries to convince him by telling him of the "holy vows of heaven" which "[give] countenance to his speech" (I, iii, 113-114).

In Act III, scene i, line 159, she says that she had "sucked the honey of his musicked vows." The verb "sucked" is active, indicating that she was not passively receiving his vows of love. Ophelia loved to hear the sweetness of his loving words and she wanted him to tell her that he loved her. She kept remembrances of Hamlet's; letters with "words of so sweet breath composed" (III, i, 98). She cherished the love letters he sent her and kept them as mementos. However, Ophelia does not love him enough to go against her father wishes, so at the end of Act I, scene iii, line 136 she promises her father that she will discourage Hamlet's affections and she states in Act II, scene i, lines 109-110 that she has "[repelled] his letters and denied his access to [her]."

Fright

Hamlet's feigned insanity frightens Ophelia away. In Act II, scene i, Ophelia reports to her father about the recent encounter she has had with Hamlet. She says he looked as though he had been "loosed out of hell to speak of horrors" (II, i, 83-84) and that she "truly [did] fear it"(II, i, 86). His seeming insanity and rudeness basically strangles any love Ophelia had for him. In Act III, scene i, she returns remembrances of his, for "their perfume [has been] lost" (III, i, 99). The importance of his letters to her becomes naught when "givers prove unkind" (III, i, 101). Though Ophelia has been ordered by her father to await Hamlet, within the text of the play he does not tell her to give back these once

cherished items or to explain to Hamlet how they were once important to her. She does not want his love anymore and is letting him know how she feels. She calls herself "most deject and wretched" (Act III, scene I, line 158). Apparently spurned by Hamlet, she feels unhappy about the loss of his love.

Effects on the play

Ophelia's spurned love may have been one of the reasons for her eventual insanity. This, along with her father's death, is more than she can take and she breaks down under the pressure. Her death brings about confrontation between Laertes and Hamlet. Because she had at first accepted Hamlet's affections, before her father told her to refuse them, she is used as a pawn by her father and King Claudius. They use her to try to bait Hamlet and to prove whether or not he is truly insane.