

Hamlet Lesson 7 Handout 9 Decisions Decisions



Hamlet Lesson 7 Handout 9 Decisions Decisions delves into one of the most pivotal themes of Shakespeare's play, "Hamlet": the struggle with decision-making. This lesson handout is designed to guide students through the complex decisions faced by the characters in the play, particularly Prince Hamlet himself. Through this exploration, students will enhance their understanding of the text, the motivations behind the characters' actions, and the broader implications of choice in the human experience.

Understanding the Context of Hamlet's Decisions

In Shakespeare's "Hamlet," the protagonist grapples with profound moral and existential questions. The ghost of Hamlet's father implores him to avenge his murder, setting off a chain of events that forces Hamlet to confront his own values, beliefs, and fears. The concept of indecision is central to the play, as Hamlet famously vacillates between action and inaction. This lesson handout provides students with a framework for analyzing Hamlet's choices and the consequences they bring.

The Importance of Decision-Making in Hamlet

Decision-making is a recurring theme in "Hamlet." The play illustrates how choices can lead to unforeseen outcomes, affecting not only the individual making the decision but also those around them. Here are some key reasons why decision-making is crucial in the narrative:

1. **Character Development:** Hamlet's choices reveal his inner turmoil and complexity. His indecision highlights his philosophical nature and moral considerations.
2. **Plot Progression:** The decisions made by Hamlet and other characters drive the narrative forward, leading to key events such as the deaths of multiple characters.
3. **Thematic Depth:** Decisions reflect larger themes of fate, free will, and the moral implications of revenge. The play encourages readers to ponder the weight of their own choices.

Key Decisions Faced by Hamlet

In "Hamlet," the titular character is faced with several crucial decisions that shape the course of the play. Each choice is laden with significance and reflects Hamlet's internal conflict. Here are some of the most important decisions he grapples with:

- **To avenge or not to avenge:** Hamlet's primary struggle is whether to kill Claudius, his father's murderer. This decision weighs heavily on his conscience and leads to intense philosophical reflection.
- **To feign madness:** Hamlet decides to pretend to be insane as a strategy to uncover the truth about his father's death. This decision complicates his relationships with other characters, particularly Ophelia and Gertrude.
- **To confront his mother:** Hamlet's decision to confront Gertrude about her marriage to Claudius reveals his feelings of betrayal and disgust. This moment is pivotal for both his character and the overall plot.
- **To trust the ghost:** Hamlet must decide whether to trust the ghost of his father. This choice reflects his struggle with belief and skepticism, influencing his subsequent actions.

The Consequences of Hamlet's Decisions

Each decision that Hamlet makes leads to significant repercussions, both predictable and unforeseen. The consequences of his choices unravel the tragic narrative of the play. Here are some key outcomes of Hamlet's decisions:

1. The Death of Ophelia: Hamlet's erratic behavior and rejection of Ophelia contribute to her descent into madness and eventual death, highlighting the impact of his choices on others.
2. The Play Within a Play: By staging "The Mousetrap," Hamlet seeks to confirm Claudius's guilt. This decision ultimately leads to a series of events that spiral out of control.
3. The Death of Gertrude: Hamlet's actions indirectly lead to the death of his mother, as she consumes poison intended for him. This tragedy emphasizes the collateral damage of his quest for revenge.
4. The Final Duel: Hamlet's decision to confront Laertes results in a duel that culminates in multiple deaths, including his own, showcasing the tragic consequences of his indecision and impulsive actions.

Classroom Activities and Discussions

To engage students with the theme of decision-making in "Hamlet," several classroom activities can be incorporated. Here are a few suggestions:

1. **Character Decision Mapping:** Have students create a decision map for Hamlet, outlining key choices he makes throughout the play and their consequences.
2. **Debate on Revenge:** Divide the class into groups to debate the moral implications of revenge as portrayed in the play. This encourages critical thinking about Hamlet's decisions.
3. **Creative Reimagining:** Ask students to choose a pivotal moment in the play and reimagine it with an alternative decision. How would the story change if Hamlet had acted differently?
4. **Journaling Reflection:** Encourage students to keep a reflective journal on how they would handle Hamlet's dilemmas. What choices would they make and why?

Conclusion

Hamlet Lesson 7 Handout 9 Decisions Decisions provides a comprehensive overview of the intricate decision-making processes in "Hamlet." By analyzing the choices faced by the characters, particularly Hamlet, students gain insight into the complexities of human behavior, morality, and the consequences of action and inaction. Through engaging activities and discussions, this lesson serves to deepen students' appreciation of Shakespeare's work, while also encouraging them to reflect on their own decision-making in life. Ultimately, the exploration of choices and their outcomes remains a timeless and relevant topic, resonating well beyond the confines of the classroom.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the key themes explored in Hamlet's 'Decisions, Decisions' lesson?

The key themes include the complexity of decision-making, the consequences of choices, moral dilemmas, and the impact of internal conflict on human behavior.

How does Hamlet's indecision reflect on his character development throughout the play?

Hamlet's indecision highlights his introspective nature and philosophical outlook, showcasing his struggle between action and inaction, which ultimately leads to tragic consequences.

What role do external influences play in Hamlet's decision-making process?

External influences such as societal expectations, familial pressure, and the ghost's demands significantly impact Hamlet's choices, demonstrating how context can shape an individual's decisions.

How can students apply the lessons from Hamlet's decision-making to real-life situations?

Students can learn to weigh the pros and cons of their choices, consider the potential consequences, and reflect on their values and beliefs when making important decisions in their own lives.

What are some examples of key decisions made by Hamlet in this lesson?

Key decisions include whether to avenge his father's death, how to confront Claudius, and whether to trust the ghost, each illustrating the complexity of his character and the weight of his choices.

How does the concept of 'tragic flaw' relate to Hamlet's decision-making?

Hamlet's tragic flaw, often interpreted as his excessive contemplation and inability to act decisively, is central to his decision-making struggles and ultimately contributes to the tragedy of the play.

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Gertrude Hamlet Claudius Ophelia Polonius Laertes Hamlet
Hamlet Ophelia Hamlet

Explore Hamlet Lesson 7 Handout 9: Decisions Decisions. Uncover key insights and strategies for
analyzing choices in Shakespeare's masterpiece. Learn more!

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