The Sanity of Hamlet – Tenney L Davis

* The question of Hamlet's madness, whether genuine or feigned, poses significant challenges for interpretation within the context of Shakespeare's play.
* Hamlet's own testimony regarding his mental state is inherently unreliable, complicating efforts to find out the truth.
* Notable scholars such as Dr Johnson and Coleridge offer differing perspectives on the nature of Hamlet's supposed madness.
* Coleridge suggests that Hamlet's introspective (spends considerable time examining his own thoughts and feelings) and contemplative nature leads to an imbalance between thought and action, contributing to his perceived madness.
* Furthermore, Hamlet's emotional turmoil following his father's death and his mother's hasty remarriage increase his psychological distress.
* Rather than resorting to physical violence or hedonistic pursuits, Hamlet copes with his grief and frustration through logic and rigorous intellectual inquiry.
* His liking for logical analysis and philosophical reflection serves as both a coping mechanism and a manifestation of his inner turmoil.
* Hamlet's logical responses to social interactions often lead to misunderstandings and social ostracism (exclusion from a society or group), as his peers struggle to comprehend his intellectual depth and emotional turmoil.
* Despite his apparent madness, Hamlet displays a keen awareness of his own mental processes, engaging in profound reflections on life, death, and the nature of reality.
* Poe and Galton contemplate the complex relationship between madness and genius, suggesting that Hamlet's alluded madness might be intertwined with his intellectual brilliance.
* While the true nature of Hamlet's madness remains uncertain, his reliance on logic and rationality is a defining aspect of his character, challenging conventional notions of sanity and madness within the play.

The Character of Hamlet’s Mother – Carolyn Heilbrun

* The character of Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, has been subject to inadequate observation by critics, who have traditionally depicted her as weak and shallow, failing to recognize her true complexity.
* Critics acknowledge Gertrude's significance in the play due to her familial ties and actions, particularly her marriage to Claudius, the current King of Denmark, shortly after the death of Hamlet's father, the former king.
* Despite being recognized as vital to the plot, Gertrude has often been portrayed as well-meaning but lacking depth, described as incapable of sustained rational thought or significant agency.
* However, upon closer examination of Gertrude's interactions and dialogue throughout the play, she emerges as a character of intelligence, perceptiveness, and clear expression.
* Gertrude's speeches reveal her clear understanding of reality and self-awareness, contradicting the notion of her being merely shallow or passive.
* Despite being labelled as weak, Gertrude demonstrates courage and intelligence in various instances, challenging the simplistic portrayal of her character.
* Debate exists among critics regarding Gertrude's fidelity, with some suggesting she may have committed adultery with Claudius before her husband's death. However, evidence within the play contradicts this interpretation.
* Gertrude's flaw of lust is shown to play a significant role in the plot, as it enables Claudius to ascend to the throne by marrying her, highlighting the consequences of her desires.
* Despite this flaw, Gertrude's intelligence and speech patterns bear resemblance to those of Horatio, indicating a depth of character beyond mere shallowness and reinforcing her complexity as a character.