Hamlet And J Alfred Prufrock Essay, Research Paper

Hamlet and J. Alfred Prufrock

Hamlet and J Alfred Prufrock have three major things in common; question and rationalize theirs situations as well as procrastinate. In this essay, I will explain how they both handle their situations through quotes and how a life of doing so has affected them.

In Shakespeare’s Hamlet, questioning, procrastination and rationalization define Hamlet’s character. Hamlet is a very analytical person: he carefully plans and thoroughly questions his actions. Hamlet has a way of dealing with his problems. First he questions the situation, rationalizes, then procrastinates. An example of Hamlet’s questioning becomes apparent in act 1, scene 5. In that scene Hamlet questions the commands of the ghost of Hamlet Sr. ” Murder My uncle?” 1 He then rationalizes, ” Yea, from the table of my memory, ill wipe away all trivial fond records/And thy commandment all alone shall live alone” 2 One would think that in his rage Hamlet would now act upon the commandment, but he does not. ” Time is out of joint. O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right”3 Hamlet decides to procrastinate his action of killing Claudius.

Another example of his questioning, rationalizing and procrastinating is when Hamlet is in the Chapel with Claudius (Hamlet is in the prime position to kill him. He questions even questions killing Claudius “Now might I do it pat, now he is praying and now I’ll do’t: and so he goes to heaven: and so am I revenged.” 4 Hamlet then rationalizes why he should kill Claudius now. His reason is, “That would be scanned/ O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.” 5 He then procrastinates, ” With all his crimes broad blown as flush as May…Up sword when he is drunk asleep, or in his rage That has no relish of salvation in’t, then I’ll trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven/ As hell whereto it goes” 6 Hamlet thus puts off the killing for another time.

Hamlet also questions, rationalizes and procrastinates when it comes to Ophelia. He tries to deny his love for her. ” Where is your father? let the doors be shut on’t him If thou dost marry, I’ll give thee this plague for dowry Get thee to a nunnery Or if thou needs marry, marry a fool!” 7 Once again Hamlet rationalizes, ” I have heard of your paintings too/ Go to, ill have no more on’t: it hath made me mad. I’ll say we will have no more marriages: those that are married already/ shall keep as they are” 8 Although Hamlet shouts at her, he loves Ophelia and delays telling her that, showing procrastination.

Hamlet also questions his mother, Gertrude while in her chambers. He says ” What’ s the matter/ You have thy father much offended/ A bloody deed! Almost as bad, good mother, as kill a king, and marry with his brother/ Have you no eyes?/ Can you call it love?” 9 Hamlet now realized what he had done, rationalizes the situation, “It is not madness that I have uttered/ And I the matter will re- word. Mother for love of grace, lay not that flattering unction to your soul/ Forgive me this my virtue”10 Then Hamlet again procrastinates the killing of Claudius. Hamlet tries to delay his obligation to his father by asking his mother to tell Claudius that is mad. “For a pair of reechy kisses…Make you to ravel all this matter out. That I essentially am not in madness, but mad in craft” 11 This is just prolonging Hamlet’s duty to his father. Hamlet decides to put on a play on how Hamlet Sr. died and watches Claudius’ reaction, instead of acting on impulse.

Hamlet’ s lack of action and over thinking ultimately leads to his death in a duel with Laertes. His procrastination also causes the death of Ophelia, Laertes, Gertrude, Polonius, and eventually Claudius. Hamlet is responsible for all the deaths in the play because of his inaction. It is plausible that if Hamlet had killed Claudius sooner, Polonius would not have been killed; Ophelia would not have committed suicide. Hamlet would have not had to kill Laertes and Gertrude would have not drunk the poison.

J. Alfred Prufrock also engaged in the same actions. He also questions, rationalizes and procrastinates, but in a slightly different order. Prufrock questions, procrastinates, then rationalizes. Prufrock questions his whole existence as well as the people at the party. Prufrock fears that the people at the party will not accept him. Prufrock procrastinates because he fears rejection and is not confident enough to speak out. He sees the people as shallow, “Known them already, known them all.” 12 The phrase ” I the room where the women come and go/ talking of Michaelangelo” 13 describes how Prufrock sees the women as having a bit of intelligence, but lack depth. He also procrastinates because he fears that the partygoers will gossip about him. “They will say ‘how is hair is growing thin’, My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly on my chin, my necktie and modest, but asserted by a simple pin-they will say, but how his arms and legs are thin’.’ 14 ” I was afraid.” 15 He wants to say his feeling, but is afraid no one will understand him.

Although he wishes he could speak he cannot bring himself to say it aloud. Prufrock makes the decision to delay and to conform his behavior and settles for the shallow life. He makes the ultimate decision to procrastinate. He realizes he will never speak out and live a life of “toast and tea” 16 He will accept that he has and will always “…measure out my life out with coffeespoons” 17 ” Do I dare disturb the universe?” 18 Or ” have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?” 19 Prufrock does not want to try. “No, I am not prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; am an attendant lord, one that will do to swell a progress, start a scene or two, advise the prince: no doubt, an easy tool”20. Prufrock seems more like Polonius, an old attendant who is wise and eager to please everyone. Prufrock rationalizes his procrastination and comes to the conclusion that there will be ” time yet for another hundred indecisions, / and for a hundred visions and revisions.”21 Prufrock knows he is not like the rest of the party goers. However, he lacks the motivation, or the will power, to show them he is different for fear of being “almost at times, the fool”22 He is afraid no one will understand him. Because of his procrastination he has no accomplished anything.

Hamlet and J Alfred Prufrock both lived a life of procrastination. Hamlet triggered all the events in the play because of his delay. If Hamlet had killed Claudius when he first had the chance, Polonius would not have died. Polonius’ death was the reason why Ophelia committed suicide. Ophelia’s death angered Laertes, which made Laertes want to challenge Hamlet in a duel. At the duel, Gertrude died, as well as Laertes. Prufrock has procrastinated all his life out for fear of being rejected. He desperately wants to say his feelings,

but does not want to upset the social customs. He rationalizes his procrastinations and makes the ultimate decision never to say anything. The consequence of not speaking out is that he will become like the rest of the people at the party. He will conform because he is afraid. He will continue to live a meaningless life of ” toast and tea”23 For these men, a life of questioning, rationalizing, and procrastinating has destroyed their lives and others. Prufrock has given up his identity to be accepted while Hamlet’s delay has taken the life of many people.