Similarities Of Lord Hamlet And Laertes: Comparative Essay

In life, no matter how similar people are raised, people will never be the same. Each individual evolves with his or her own personalities, motivations, and relationships. We see this to be true in William Shakespeare's Hamlet. Lord Hamlet and Laertes had many similarities: the death of their fathers, their love for Ophelia, their motivations before the duel, and their eventual deaths. However, they greatly differed in their personalities, motivations during the duel and how they sought revenge.

Human nature is quite a sight to see, both Laertes and Hamlet had a similar past. Not only are they connected by royalty and school, but they are also connected by death. We know early on that Hamlet lost his father to poison by the hands of his uncle Claudius. "One may smile, and smile, and be a villain." (Hamlet Act 1, Scene 5, Lines 106-108.) By killing Hamlet's father, the uncle is now a king and marries Hamlet's mother. While mourning his father, Hamlet sees the spirit of his father imploring Hamlet to avenge his death. When the spirit of Hamlet's father visits him, Hamlet is not entirely convinced that it is a friendly spirit for it could be a damned spirit from the underworld feeding him lies. The spirit did not simply let Hamlet approach him, Hamlet had to follow the spirit all throughout the castle and finally spoke to him once it was only the two of them speaking in private. "The serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown" (Hamlet Act 1, Scene 5, Lines 39-40.) Hamlet makes the night guards promise upon his sword that they will never speak of what they saw that night. Hamlet becomes insane to other people but he continues with his plans to reenact his father's death in a play. The cast was not easily convinced but Hamlet managed to get them to reenact King Hamlet's death. Claudius was enjoying the play up until he realized what was happening. Claudius panicked and got up because he felt as if he was reliving the murder all over again. He goes for some air and Hamlet follows to speak with his mother privately. While speaking with his mother, he hears someone behind the curtain. He stabs the curtain, intending to kill Claudius but accidentally kills Polonius who is the father of Laertes and Ophelia. This is where there is some similarity, both Laertes and Hamlet have lost their father to a murder, and seek to avenge their death. When presented with a difficult situation we all react differently, no matter where we came from.

The difference in the way that Laertes and Hamlet take revenge is a contrast between them. When Hamlet is presented with the ghost of his father and asked to avenge, he decided to plan out his revenge instead of just acting out of anger. However, when Laertes finds out that his father had been killed, he tries getting revenge without having any evidence or concrete knowledge of what happened. We can tell that Laertes is character-driven by emotion rather than by reason whereas Hamlet, who takes it within reason, is an overthinker. Hamlet over-analyzes every detail and ends up not acting upon his revenge while Laertes acts upon impulse. We can see how Hamlet pushes his revenge back by saying that his soul will not get into heaven if he were to kill his uncle while he was praying, "No might I do it pat, now he is praying" (Hamlet, Act III, Scene 3, Lines 74-75) instead of killing Claudius, he postpones killing him. Laertes is different however, he takes the death of his father by vowing to Claudius to avenge it no matter what. In the text, " I dare damnation. To this point I stand, That both the worlds I give to negligence, Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged. Most thoroughly for my father." (Hamlet, Act IV, Scene 4, Lines 106-110) He says that no matter what he will take

revenge and nobody can do anything to stop him. He is quick at trying to put the blame on people, at first he blames Claudius for his father's death and then changes it to Hamlet without having much information.

Love is a great influencer, and for Hamlet it certainly was. Ophelia is the sister of Laertes, and knowing how Hamlet is, Laertes does not approve of their courtship and advises Ophelia to end her courtship with him. Not only does Laertes not approve of the courtship but Polonius also disapproves of it. Earlier in the play, Laertes leaves on a quest. Polonius is aware that Ophelia wants to be with Hamlet and that Laertes does not approve of that relationship. Polonius informs Hamlet's mother and uncle about their feelings and sets them up. Although he thought they were not spotted, Hamlet knew what was going on. He treated Ophelia poorly so his mother and uncle thought Polonius was lying about them having feelings for each other. "Ay, truly, for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once." (Hamlet, Act III, Scene 1, Lines 113-118). He treated Ophelia bad just due to Hamlet thinking that he was being deceived, and proceeded to tell her that he never loved her.

After the accidental death of Polonius, Hamlet is sent away to England and Ophelia becomes mad (as in crazy). She has nowhere to go and has completely lost her mind. Ophelia wanders around singing songs and passing out flowers and herbs to everyone. She even gives herself rue, an herb, which symbolizes regret. One evening while strolling around, she goes to a pond and climbs a tree. A branch snaps and she falls from the tree into the pond where she drowns due to her insanity restraining her from swimming. "I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum." (Hamlet, Act V, Scene 1, Lines 247-249). Hamlet says this line depicting how much love he really had for Ophelia, and how her brother could never love her the way he did. Laertes, however, mourning the death of his sister, which he blamed Hamlet for, launches himself into the casket and this scene gives us great insight on how both of them loved Ophelia. Then they proceed to try to duel in the ceremony, and they have separated right after.

The fencing match was a pivotal point in the story, after Hamlet's apology, Laertes does not turn down the match due to pride and accepts it. Hamlet only accepts the offer of a duel for sportsmanship, in hopes of solving the fights, and he also wants to fight with dull blades. This duel clearly distinguishes their different motivations towards each other. Hamlet was hoping to end on good terms instead of fighting but Laertes and Claudius wanted Hamlet dead. However, we must consider that in his rage, Laertes was easily convinced to kill Hamlet by Claudius, and in order to ensure his victory, Claudius poisons the tip of his sword and Claudius poisons Hamlet's drink for when he takes a break. Hamlet did not drink from his cup, but his mother unfortunately did. When it started to look like Hamlet would win the duel, Laertes takes a cheap shot when he is not looking and cuts him. At this point Hamlet's motivation changes and he stabs Laertes. Within minutes, Hamlet's mother dies from the poison, Hamlet blames Claudius for her death. Hamlet fatally stabs Claudius with the poisoned sword and eventually, Hamlet himself dies because of Laertes' cheap shot earlier in the duel. As Laertes is dying he asks Hamlet to forgive him and proceeds to tell Hamlet about Claudius's plan to kill him. "He is justly served.

It is a poison tempered by himself. Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. Mine and my father's death come not upon thee, Nor thine on me." (Hamlet, Act V, Scene 2, Lines 321-327).

In William Shakespeare’s Hamlet, the similarities between Hamlet and Laertes are discussed at great length. We see how the two characters are similar with their fathers dying at the hands of someone else and their love for Ophelia. We also see how the characters are different in terms of their personalities, their stories for seeking revenge, and intentions during their duel. With the full development of both characters throughout the story, we are able to see how these two people can be so alike with experiences they share, yet act in such different ways as a result of said shared experiences. As we saw in the story, Hamlet and Laertes are very similar, but the fundamental differences in how they took control of things they found out led them to be very different in that regard, and that these differences can make two people are similar in every aspect complete opposites.