Summary of Hamlet, by William Shakespeare

On a dark winter night, a ghost walks the ramparts of Elsinore Castle in Denmark. Discovered first by a pair of watchmen, then by the scholar Horatio, the ghost resembles the recently deceased King Hamlet, whose brother Claudius has inherited the throne and married the king’s widow, Queen Gertrude. When Horatio and the watchmen bring Prince Hamlet, the son of Gertrude and the dead king, to see the ghost, it speaks to him, declaring ominously that it is indeed his father’s spirit, and that he was murdered by none other than Claudius. Ordering Hamlet to seek revenge on the man who usurped his throne and married his wife, the ghost disappears with the dawn.

Prince Hamlet devotes himself to avenging his father’s death, but, because he is contemplative and thoughtful by nature, he delays, entering into a deep melancholy and even apparent madness. Claudius and Gertrude worry about the prince’s erratic behavior and attempt to discover its cause. They employ a pair of Hamlet’s friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to watch him. When Polonius, the pompous Lord Chamberlain, suggests that Hamlet may be mad with love for his daughter, Ophelia, Claudius agrees to spy on Hamlet in conversation with the girl. But though Hamlet certainly seems mad, he does not seem to love Ophelia: he orders her to enter a nunnery and declares that he wishes to ban marriages.

A group of traveling actors comes to Elsinore, and Hamlet seizes upon an idea to test his uncle’s guilt. He will have the players perform a scene closely resembling the sequence by which Hamlet imagines his uncle to have murdered his father, so that if Claudius is guilty, he will surely react. When the moment of the murder arrives in the theater, Claudius leaps up and leaves the room. Hamlet and Horatio agree that this proves his guilt. Hamlet goes to kill Claudius but finds him praying. Since he believes that killing Claudius while in prayer would send Claudius’s soul to heaven, Hamlet considers that it would be an inadequate revenge and decides to wait. Claudius, now frightened of Hamlet’s madness and fearing for his own safety, orders that Hamlet be sent to England at once.

Hamlet goes to confront his mother, in whose bedchamber Polonius has hidden behind a tapestry. Hearing a noise from behind the tapestry, Hamlet believes the king is hiding there. He draws his sword and stabs through the fabric, killing Polonius. For this crime, he is immediately dispatched to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. However, Claudius’s plan for Hamlet includes more than banishment, as he has given Rosencrantz and Guildenstern sealed orders for the King of England demanding that Hamlet be put to death.

In the aftermath of her father’s death, Ophelia goes mad with grief and drowns in the river. Polonius’s son, Laertes, who has been staying in France, returns to Denmark in a rage. Claudius convinces him that Hamlet is to blame for his father’s and sister’s deaths. When Horatio and the king receive letters from Hamlet indicating that the prince has returned to Denmark after pirates attacked his ship en route to England, Claudius concocts a plan to use Laertes’ desire for revenge to secure Hamlet’s death. Laertes will fence with Hamlet in innocent sport, but Claudius will poison Laertes’ blade so that if he draws blood, Hamlet will die. As a backup plan, the king decides to poison a goblet, which he will give Hamlet to drink should Hamlet score the first or second hits of the match. Hamlet returns to the vicinity of Elsinore just as Ophelia’s funeral is taking place. Stricken with grief, he attacks Laertes and declares that he had in fact always loved Ophelia. Back at the castle, he tells Horatio that he believes one must be prepared to die, since death can come at any moment. A foolish courtier named Osric arrives on Claudius’s orders to arrange the fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes.

The sword-fighting begins. Hamlet scores the first hit, but declines to drink from the king’s proffered goblet. Instead, Gertrude takes a drink from it and is swiftly killed by the poison. Laertes succeeds in wounding Hamlet, though Hamlet does not die of the poison immediately. First, Laertes is cut by his own sword’s blade, and, after revealing to Hamlet that Claudius is responsible for the queen’s death, he dies from the blade’s poison. Hamlet then stabs Claudius through with the poisoned sword and forces him to drink down the rest of the poisoned wine. Claudius dies, and Hamlet dies immediately after achieving his revenge.

At this moment, a Norwegian prince named Fortinbras, who has led an army to Denmark and attacked Poland earlier in the play, enters with ambassadors from England, who report that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. Fortinbras is stunned by the gruesome sight of the entire royal family lying sprawled on the floor dead. He moves to take power of the kingdom. Horatio, fulfilling Hamlet’s last request, tells him Hamlet’s tragic story. Fortinbras orders that Hamlet be carried away in a manner befitting a fallen soldier

**Both families are royal families.**

Simba is the main character in Disney's *The Lion King.*he is the son of Mufasa, the king of the lions, which makes Simba a prince. Hamlet, from Shakespeare's*The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* is the son of the tragically murdered King Hamlet, which makes him a prince too.

**The uncle characters are very similar.**

Most people know that, in *The Lion King*, Simba has an evil uncle named Scar. Scar is jealous of his brother, Mufasa, because he wants to be the king instead. Of course, Scar kills his brother to get what he wants. In *Hamlet*, Hamlet has an uncle named Claudius. When the reader enters the story, Claudius has already become king—by killing his brother, who was the king.

**Relationships.**

In *The Lion King,* Simba develops close friendships with the ever-entertaining Timone and Pumbaa. They are there for him during a time in his life where he has no one, and they teach him how to enjoy life. Simba also has a love interest named Nala. They were friends as young cubs, but romance blossomed when they met again as adults.

In *Hamlet*, Hamlet has a friend named Horatio whom he knew from college. Though Horatio does not have as big of an impact on Hamlet as Timone and Pumbaa have on Simba, he does help Hamlet on several occasions and can be considered his one true friend. Hamlet also has a love interest named Ophelia. There is much controversy about whether he truly loved her or was simply using her, but she is the one young woman in his life nonetheless.

**Both of their fathers die.**

As previously mentioned, both (King) Mufasa and King Hamlet are murdered by their brothers, who then took over as the kings.

**Both of their fathers reappear as ghosts.**

Mufasa appears to Simba in the stars and tells him to take his proper place in the circle of life (as king). Hamlet’s father appears as a ghost and tells Hamlet to take revenge on his uncle.

**Both princes are sent away.**

Simba spends a long time with Timone and Pumbaa after Scar convinces him to run away. Hamlet’s uncle convinces him to travel to England, where he is secretly supposed to be killed, though he survives.

**Both princes end up fighting their uncles.**

Simba fights with Scar, who ends up being killed by the hyenas. Hamlet kills his uncle with a sword and poisoned wine.

**Both princes must overcome a moral struggle.**

In *The Lion King*, Simba has to learn to step up and take his place as king instead of running from his past. In *Hamlet*, Hamlet has to make the decision to kill his uncle, and also not to kill himself (a struggle that takes place in his famous "to be or not to be" soliloquy).

**Simba and Hamlet are different ages.**

Simba is young when his father dies, whereas Hamlet is probably about 30.

**Simba's story is generally a happy one.**

Simba is sad when his father dies, but spends most of his years in a happy, “Hakuna Matata” state with Timone and Pumbaa.

Hamlet is depressed and suicidal the entire time, with bouts of potential madness.

**Most of the characters in "Hamlet" die.**

In *The Lion King*, only the uncle and the father die.

In *Hamlet,* the uncle, the father, the mother, Hamlet himself, Hamlet’s love interest (Ophelia), Ophelia’s father, Ophelia’s brother, and other minor characters all die.

**Simba lives happily ever after.**

Simba and Nala get married and have a baby at the end, but Hamlet and Ophelia never get married (since they both die).

**Simba receives moral guidance.**

Simba has moral guides such as Zazu and Rafiki to help him make good decisions. However, Hamlet does not receive any moral guidance, except the ghost’s call for revenge, which really isn't that moral anyway.

**Hamlet's mother gets remarried.**

Simba’s mother and Scar are never shown as being married after Mufasa's death, but Hamlet’s uncle does marry Hamlet's mother.

**The number of supporting characters differs.**

*Hamlet* includes "extra" important characters. For example, Hamlet kills Ophelia’s father, Polonius, and fights her brother, Laertes. These are crucial events in the play, but have no equivalent in *The Lion King.*

**And of course, the species involved are different.**

*The Lion King* has lions, whereas *Hamlet* has humans.