

Hamlet's Madness Chart

Use the chart below to note each author's differing ideas on Hamlet's madness.

T.S. Eliot	Simon Blackmore
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Eliot acknowledges that there are critics who insert their own creative minds into their analysis of the character Hamlet. This presents a problem for Eliot because those critics forget that they are studying the work of art. -Eliot references two critics with whom he agrees: Mr. J. M. Robertson and Professor Stoll. -Eliot explains that a work of art cannot be interpreted but should only be criticized based upon a set of standards. -Eliot notes Robertson's claim that "Hamlet is a stratification." By this, he means Shakespeare's <i>Hamlet</i> is simply an adding onto an established story and character. -Eliot argues that the play and the character are both problematic. -He claims that the alterations Shakespeare has made to the original are "not complete enough" to truly convince the audience. -Eliot also explains that Shakespeare's "verbal parallels" are too similar to <i>The Spanish Tragedy</i> by Kyd that it is obvious that he is simply revising the original text. -Eliot argues that the main theme is that of a son dealing with the effects of a mother's guilt. Further, he concludes that Shakespeare fails at portraying this motive with success. -Eliot claims that <i>Hamlet</i> is an "artistic failure." He calls it the "Mona Lisa" of literature because people find it interesting but not a true work of art. -Also, he compares <i>Hamlet</i> to Shakespeare's sonnets. He claims that just as in the sonnets, Hamlet is "full of stuff that the writer could not drag to light, contemplate, or manipulate into art." -Eliot argues that Hamlet the character is "dominated" by inexpressible emotions. Hamlet's emotions are too much for the target of those emotions: his mother. Eliot states that Hamlet's "disgust envelops and exceeds her." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Blackmore acknowledges two "opposing schools" on the subject of Hamlet's madness, one that believes it real and one that believes it unreal. Further, he compares the divide with the divide of characters that believe Hamlet's madness real and unreal. -Blackmore argues that Shakespeare includes too many of the attributes of a madman to make Hamlet's madness believable. -He cites Shakespeare's exposure to the symptoms of insanity while living on Muggleton Street, which was located near an insane asylum. -Blackmore states that Shakespeare's intention is important in deciding if Hamlet's madness is real or not. -He compares the madness of Lear and Ophelia to that of Edgar and Hamlet. Both Lear and Ophelia "disclose no purpose nor design in their madness." Also, both characters are unable to hide what causes their madness. On the contrary, Edgar and Hamlet are "alert to conceal" their madness. -Blackmore gives specific reasons to support Hamlet's feigned madness: that it conforms with the original story and that by wearing the "mask of a madman" Hamlet can further his plan for revenge. -Also, he argues that Shakespeare gives hints in the play to support Hamlet's madness as feigned. First, Hamlet never loses his eloquent command of language. Second, Hamlet discloses his plan to fake madness to Horatio. Third, Hamlet's treatment of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. -Blackmore also notes Hamlet's dialogue with Laertes as proof that he is faking madness. Blackmore acknowledges that Hamlet is only temporarily insane when he kills Polonius and mourns Ophelia.

-Eliot says that in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the madness is "less than madness and more than feigned."

-Finally, Eliot asserts that the character of Hamlet is one of inaction not madness, and that Shakespeare is overly emotional but cannot translate that emotion correctly in his art.

-His last reason is that because *Hamlet* is art the character Hamlet's madness must be faked.