

Hamlet

What choices was Hamlet pondering in his “to be or not to be” soliloquy?

The choice Hamlet has to make is if he wants to live and suffer or die while fighting the suffering. He is also conflicted about his belief in the after world, although seeing his dead father he struggles with the idea of a life after death. He tries to imagine death as a sort of sleep which frightens him because his dreams would become his reality and there would be no waking up. The whole soliloquy is about his attitude towards life and death.

What challenge did he face in his life at that time? What would you have done in his situation?

The challenge was to revenge the death of his father, who told him as a ghost that his brother Claudius had killed him. He has to decide if he suffers in silence, while knowing what his uncle did or if he takes action and risks being killed himself. Not actually being in this kind of predicament makes it hard to decide which option I would choose. As a rational person deadly revenge is not an option as I would go to prison for murder. If I look at the situation from the emotional side of course you want to revenge the death of a parent. So being faced with a decision like this it is no wonder Hamlet went a little mad.

What did Hamlet decide to do? What things did he do (or not do) that eventually led to the tragic end of the play?

Hamlet decides to kill Claudius but while fighting with his mother Gertrude ends up killing Polonius, Claudius advisor and Ophelia's father. Hamlet's pretended madness, the following rejection of Hamlet and the death of her father drive Ophelia mad and she drowns herself. Laertes wants to revenge the death of his father Polonius and his sister Ophelia, so he and Claudius make a plan to kill Hamlet. Laertes pretends he wants to fight Hamlet just to measure each other's strength but he secretly sharpens his weapon and poisons it. Meanwhile Claudius prepares a drink that is poisoned as well, in the end the plan goes wrong and everybody dies.

What do his actions say of his personality? What kind of man was Hamlet?

For Hamlet inaction would have made him a coward, so his only option, as a real man was to stand up and face the actions that were demanded from his father. Honoring his father's wish while being deeply conflicted with this demand makes him a person of values. He tests his uncle's guilt before taking any action which makes him rational although he believes in the ghost of his father as well. His sharp sense can be also seen in his reaction to his friends and Ophelia who are sent to him by Claudius to check on him which he can see right away.

Do you think Hamlet was overcome with insanity during the course of the play?

I think believing in a ghost makes him a little insane, but throughout the plot he keeps making decisions based on reason which is not what an insane person would do. I do not think that Hamlet is insane, just torn with grief and the struggle to honor his father but also stick to his values, which just makes him deeply conflicted and uncertain in his actions.