



## Hamlet: Poem Unlimited

By Harold Bloom

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In Harold Bloom's *New York Times* bestselling *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, the world's foremost literary critic theorized on the authorship of the historic play *Hamlet*. In this engaging new stand-alone work, he offers a full and warmly personal account of the play itself, explores its extraordinary impact throughout the history of western literature, and seeks to uncover the mystery at its heart.

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

The Prince of Denmark, argues the eminent Bloom, was not much loved by his father the warrior king or by his mother, Queen Gertrude. Developing themes from his *Shakespeare: Invention of the Human*, Bloom adds that Hamlet was instead rather detached, moving through life rather like the lead in his own personal drama, giving a theatrical flair to moments such as the death of Polonius and aptly choosing a play to "catch the conscience of the king." The closest thing he ever had to a parent was Yorick the Jester, and his confrontation with Yorick's skull followed shortly by his attending Ophelia's funeral dealt a serious double blow to his indifference. It was then that he moves grimly toward the climax and his own death. Bloom generates any number of provocative themes, such as Hamlet's notions about plays and acting as reflecting Shakespeare's own rivalries with Ben Jonson, and that the prince never loved Ophelia. Some of the chapters are really too short to do justice to their topics, raising more questions than answers. Nor is the last third of the book, on the play's place in our cultural heritage, up to the parts that focus on its contents, though it features fewer off-putting attacks on political correctness than Bloom's more polemical works. Still, this is not a tyro's book; Bloom makes no concessions to readers who lack a deep familiarity with the play. Nor is it for any reader with a thin skin about Bloom's assumptions about the Anglo-European literary legacy. Short, sophisticated and opinionated, this is a thorny goodie for Bardolators and Bloomians.

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From Library Journal

One of our great Shakespeare scholars investigates one the Bard's greatest characters.

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From [Booklist](#)

Hard on the heels of his grand artistic survey, *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* [BKL S 1 02], Bloom returns to what he does best, the art of close reading, and offers a heartfelt and expert interpretation of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's longest and most enigmatic play. Bloom, who unabashedly describes Shakespeare as his "mortal god," became dissatisfied with his treatment of *Hamlet* in his best-selling *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998), hence this follow-up treatise devoted entirely to a work Bloom describes thusly: "Of all poems it is the most unlimited. As a meditation upon human fragility in confrontation with death, it competes only with the world's scriptures." A provocative and extravagant claim to be sure, one Bloom energetically and entertainingly substantiates in his lucid explication of the curious structure of this "overtly audience-aware" work and in his analysis of Hamlet himself, his oceanic consciousness, profound ambivalence, keen irony, and terrible psychic isolation. As Bloom parses this indelible creation, icon and "disturbance," he shares his exaltation, once again, over Shakespeare's genius and timeless vision. *Donna Seaman*

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**From reader reviews:**

**Theresa Smith:**

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