

## Paralyzing Fear

Essay by Clint Rumley  
Lake Forest High School

I was never one who loved heights. I'm not a huge fan of scary movies, and I fear isolation. These common fears may affect me, but to someone else, they are irrational. Paralyzing fear is a confusing mix of anxiety and uncertainty, and can appear when faced with tough decisions. In *Hamlet*, Prince Hamlet struggles with murder of King Claudius, when I struggle with a problem of standing up for those who need it. These two problems may seem extremely different, but Prince Hamlet's mission of vengeance, and my mission of kindness are alike in how we handle them when we have paralyzing my fear.

Hamlet and I both have moments where we doubted ourselves because we were scared. Hamlet is on his quest to kill his uncle, and he admits his cowardice to murder him in his "To be or not to be" speech. He suffers through this because he overthinks on how to kill his uncle. When I had my problem, I didn't react because I over-analyzed on how to handle the situation. In situations of bullying, I sometimes will not react to stand up for the victim. One occurrence of this was with a best friend of mine. In the beginning of our friendship, I was too timid to stand up for him, because I would make excuses that he could handle himself. Hamlet and I shared the feeling of guilt and cowardice because we were both too scared to act on our problems in a logical fashion.

The paralyzing fear of our problems resulted from Hamlet and I tackling our problems in the wrong way. In the play, Hamlet is forbidden to get revenge on his mother by his father. However, confirming the guilt of King Claudius, Hamlet does the illogical thing and lashes out on his mother about her marriage to his bloodthirsty uncle. Hamlet subconsciously thinks he was helping his problem because he is blaming his mother; for example, he says, "frailty, thy name is woman" which shows his negative stance on women. If Hamlet would have resolved the issue by killing Claudius immediately, most of his issues as a result of not killing him could have been avoided. I would try to take the easy road out of my problems as well. For example, instead of standing up for my friend, I would try to remain friends with both groups of people, the bullies and the victim. Out of fear of being disliked by the majority, I thought it would be safer option to be neutral to both sets of people, and this would allow me to spread kindness to both my friend and his bullies. Hamlet and I tried to ease our way out of problems, and we both thought we were making progress when we really only delayed resolving them.

Putting these problems in perspective is the final step in facing these issues. Hamlet and I are alike because we both experience a self-realization that was crucial in facing our issues. In the bullying issue, I had to realize the person I was raised to be. I am not someone who needs popularity, or who condones the mistreatment of others. Once I thought about who I really am, I cut ties with the people who bullied my friend and vowed to try my hardest to be a better person. When Hamlet in standing in the graveyard in Act IV, he realizes how insignificant death really is. He accepts that we're all going to die anyway. After his enlightenment he did not hesitate to stab Claudius, even after being impaled with a poison-tipped fencing sword. To get over our paralyzing fears, all we had to accomplish was putting our problems in perspective.

I feel a strong connection to Hamlet's paralyzing fear. Prince Hamlet has an inner struggle of willpower, which hinders his murder of his uncle. Through the course of the play, he notices his cowardice, tries to tackle his problem through avoidance, and putting his paralyzing fear to rest. With these actions, I can see his internal struggle represented in my internal struggle to put myself out there and stand up for what is just. There is no more question in my life. Maturity has taught me that not everyone in life is going to like you, but to be a true leader, you embrace the negative to strive towards a positive.