

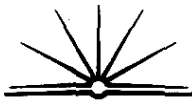
Different historical and social contexts in which the two texts 'Hamlet' and 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (RAGAD)' are written effectively shapes the form and meaning in which they encompass. Shakespeare's days involved much certainty, the people had a meaning in life: to make it to heaven. Whereas in the time Stoppard transformed the play into that of another, RAGAD, theories of existentialism and the purpose of life was a debatable topic. The form in which the two texts are portrayed is reflective of the audience of the time and also, Stoppard's wish to turn conventional theatrical methods on their head helps add to the meaning he is trying to communicate.

The Elizabethan audience enjoyed a set that was unified and organised. Tragedy had a protagonist, in this case Hamlet, a problem arising and then by the end of the play a unified resolution which was to set the audience's mind into a sense of justification. Stoppard transformed this idea into a comedy that ends in tragedy, that tragedy being

the similarity of Rand G's fate to that of our own, humanities tragedy.

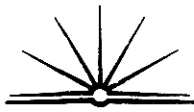
Fate & Destiny was explored in Shakespeare's play with a purpose. Hamlet had the illusion of choosing his fate, he chose his actions, but also he believed that everything happened because of God's reasoning: 'there is a divinity that shapes our ends.' Stoppard transformed this idea on fate into a modern context, 'that the only beginning is birth & the only end is death.' It explores the everyday humanity issues such as what is our purpose for being here. R&G are effectively Stoppard's representation of the human kind. He used puns, double meanings and questions to convey the human message. 'What is the game? What are the rules?' This line is used after the word game R&G use but it has another meaning, it has a reference to life which is so often asked by us.

Shakespeare's idea of a melodramatic death was what the audience of the Elizabethan era wanted.



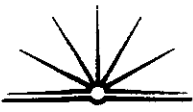
They weren't concerned with the technicalities of death as their fate was already determined by a higher being. Stoppard changes this perception of death into the frightening concept that we deal with in modern times, death is a man failing to reappear. R&G, as with humans find it hard to imagine what death is, maybe it's like 'life in a box' in which Rosencrantz imagines it as being life. The comical two come to the conclusion that 'life in a box is better than no life at all, at least you'd have a chance. This is one of the similarities of messages that are conveyed in the two contexts. Hamlet considers committing suicide but then decides against it because he believes that life is preferable to death.

The language in which the two composers use ~~one~~ is reflective of the historical context the two texts are written in. The Elizabethan language in Hamlet that is used is the same as the everyday language the audience used. Stoppard, although



there are glimpses of old language used because it was a transformation, uses colloquial comradial language that we are all familiar with & can relate to. Stoppard ensures the interception of the two plays is smooth by adding an everyday comment such as 'my good friends, how do you do today?' after the soliloquy that Hamlet has just been engaged in.

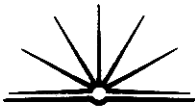
Shakespeare & his audience would have it that R&G are motivated in taking their friend to death as by self-interest & the need to get 'remembrance by the King'. Our sympathies lie with Ham & we justify his changing of the letter. Stoppard by first at all changing the name of the play from 'Hamlet' and replacing it with R&G's name in the title, subconsciously transforms the power from Hamlet to R&G. He explores the motivations behind R&G's actions in a more personal, human way by constantly reminding us that R&G are at the mercy of greater forces than & their internal instincts: powerlessness.



Stoppard doesn't change R&G from villains to heroes, but provides us with a more reasonable explanation of their actions. We as an audience, relate to these motivations as we are all deeply enrooted with the one characteristic all of humanity encompasses: self-interest.

By addressing human qualities, the Illusion vs Reality is explored through the two texts. The emphasis in Elizabethan times for acting was that of a very melodramatic nature, suited to the historical context & audience. Because of the time context of R&G real life is a more important attribute of acting. In Shakespearean times the way acting is portrayed is through expressed by the player, "everyone is who is marked for death". By Stoppard transforming this illusion of death into a reality he has made it an easier, but ironically harder, task for humans to explore their purpose & the notion of death.

The study of R&G & Hamlet makes people more aware of transformations and how



The awareness of different contexts, social & historical, shapes the meaning & form. Shakespeare's certainty vs Stoppard's existentialism effectively reaches audiences in both contexts.