AP Processed Essay Assignment for Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*

1. **Create:**
2. an **original thesis statement**
3. **a supporting outline**

**…by following the steps below:**

1. Make a list of themes in Hamlet.
2. Decide which theme in Hamlet is most interesting to you.
3. Ask yourself: WHAT “cause and effect” message does Shakespeare communicate through the use of that theme?
4. Craft this piece of your claim, putting this “cause and effect” message into a clear, coherent statement.
5. Determine HOW Shakespeare communicates this “cause and effect” message. You will now need to say in specific ways how the message is communicated through particular elements in the play, *Hamlet*: Consider that message is communicated through the thoughts and actions of a particular character, through dialogue and/or soliloquy, through plot, through particular literary devices, etc.
6. Craft the remainder of your claim, adding it to your earlier statement. Your revised statement should say that Shakespeare communicates X “cause and effect” message by showing Y.
7. Make a list of all the times in the play that Shakespeare communicates the “cause and effect” message.
8. Group these examples of HOW Shakespeare communicates the message into three sub-groups which show three distinct ways Shakespeare communicates the “cause and effect” message.
9. Decide if your message is worthy of a paper. You may need to tweak what you have---or your exploration of one theme and message may lead you to another more “doable” and more interesting claim.

Example of the mental process needed to arrive at an important message Shakespeare communicates:

* Let’s say you are interested in the theme, Appearance vs. Reality.
* You know you need to figure out what message Shakespeare is communicating about appearance vs. reality. You also know you need to communicate the message in terms of cause and effect.
* So…you start messing around with ideas…hmmm…You write that people are not who they seem. (weak…so what?....no cause and effect….still, it’s an appropriate starting place. You have to start somewhere, right?
* You then say that when people appear to be something they are not, disaster usually ensues. (better…cause and effect present…still not especially specific…)
* You keep playing around with ideas and come up with these statements:

When people are not true to themselves, their behavior has negative consequences to themselves and others.

When people deceive others, their motives are the result of selfish motivation that, ultimately, harms both themselves and those around them.

The disease of deception is contagious, and thus…..(you finish it!)

You continue to play around with ideas until you arrive at a message you know is specific, clear, and worthwhile to explore. Your message answers the question, “So what?”

Now, you’re ready to take this message Shakespeare communicates and add the specifics of the play that show exactly HOW the message is communicated.

As practice, use the ideas above to write a full claim below:

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