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In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act 4 Scene 3, Shakespeare uses wordplay and metaphors to characterize Hamlet as a complex character who speaks indirectly to mask his feelings towards King Claudius.

In the beginning of Act 4, King Claudius asks Hamlet where is Polonius. Hamlet replies that Polonius is "at supper," using supper as a metaphor to describe how Polonius is not eating, but being eaten. For example in lines 19-20, Hamlet says, "Not where he eats, but where he is eaten; a certain convocation of politic worms at e'en at him." This quote shows Hamlet using an allegory mentioning that supposedly Polonius is at supper eating food. However, in Hamlet's mind, he is describing to Claudius how Polonius is being exploited at a gathering held together with Claudius and his council where they are manipulating Polonius. Although Hamlet can't explicitly criticize Claudius and his council, Hamlet uses this conversation with Claudius as an opportunity to criticize how he is exploitative and corrupt.

By using another allegory in lines 23-25, Hamlet mentions, "Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes but one table: that's the end." Hamlet is indirectly criticizing Claudius that a fat king and a skinny beggar are more or less the same. Hamlet is trying to explain that a King and a beggar are of equal human beings if there is no kingdom. In a sense, Hamlet is belittling Claudius by explaining that he could lose his power and kingdom anytime. In another allegory, of lines 27-28, Hamlet says, "A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish

that hath fed of that worm.” As Hamlet’s father who was King was killed by Claudius, it would be possible that Claudius could lose power or be replaced by another individual.

Moreover in lines 30-31, Hamlet says, “Nothing but to show you how a king may go through a progress through the guts of a beggar.” Hamlet is explaining how a king can be swallowed up and excreted out from a beggar. This means that the King’s position is not as important as Claudius has made it seem and that his power and reign is not long-lasting where it can be easily replaced up by someone from a low-position like a beggar.

Hamlet’s answers to Claudius’ question of where is Polonius is like a riddle. This characterizes Hamlet’s complexity of his mind and his desire to keep his true feelings about Claudius a secret and to deceive Claudius into believing that Hamlet is mad.

After Hamlet replies in coded message to King Claudius’ simple question of where is Polonius, the King is even more confused after Hamlet’s complex replies which makes Claudius dumbfounded. Claudius asks again to Hamlet where is Polonius, which Hamlet replies, again with a complex riddle that Polonius could either be in heaven or hell. Hamlet’s reply is mentioned in lines 33-35, “in heaven...if your messenger find him not there, seek him in the other place yourself.” Here, Hamlet is saying to Claudius to send a messenger to go find Polonius in heaven, however, if Polonius isn’t there, that Claudius should seek for himself to find Polonius in hell. In this quote, Hamlet is giving a coded message to Claudius that Polonius could be dead and that if Claudius really wanted to find where Polonius, he could also be killed and meet Polonius in hell. As Claudius murdered Hamlet’s father, he had blood in his hands, and committed a sin. As a result, after death, Claudius’ soul could go to hell.

When Claudius sends off Hamlet to England, he tells Hamlet that he loves Hamlet as a father.

Claudius says in line 50, "Thy loving father Hamlet." As Hamlet doesn't want to express his true feelings of hatred towards Claudius, Hamlet replies positively to show respect to Claudius.

Such as in lines 51-52, Hamlet says "father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh."

Here, Hamlet is comparing Claudius to his mother whom he loves, so indirectly, he is telling Claudius that he loves Claudius like his mother. In his final farewell to Claudius, Hamlet desires to leave on good terms with Claudius and to physically prove that he loves Claudius. However, in reality, Hamlet does not love Claudius, but rather he hates him and wants to seek revenge for the murder of his father. This farewell scene is important because it's showing Hamlet's complex character of what he says physically is opposite of how he really feels inside.

In conclusion, Hamlet seem to always answer questions using metaphors and allegory because he wants to put up a facade when interacting with others. Shakespeare characterizes Hamlet as someone who masks his complex feelings so as to avoid showing his true feelings when interacting with people. Another reason why Hamlet puts on a mask is because he does not trust anyone. The outward person that Hamlet presents to others isn't indicative of his authentic self and the only time we see Hamlet as genuine with his thoughts and feelings are when he is alone presenting his soliloquies. In his soliloquies, Hamlet expresses certain plans he desires to make or when expressing his repressed feelings toward others in the Kingdom. However, when Hamlet interacts with others, he acts completely differently towards them. As a result, people think Hamlet is slowly going mad. Though, in reality, he is extremely skilled at hiding his feelings and intelligent with giving his criticism of others through wit and wordplay.