

# Motivation

## Definition of Motivation

In literature, “motivation” is defined as a reason behind a [character](#)’s specific action or behavior. This type of behavior is characterized by the character’s own consent and willingness to do something.

There are two types of motivation: one is intrinsic, while the other one is extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is linked to personal pleasure, enjoyment and interest, while extrinsic motivation is linked to numerous other possibilities. Extrinsic motivation comes from some physical reward such as money, power, or lust. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is inspired by some internal reward such as knowledge, pride, or spiritual or emotional peace or wellbeing, etc.

Characters have some motivation for every action, as do people in real life. Therefore, the implicit or explicit reference to a motivation of a character makes the piece of literature seem closer to life and reality.

## Examples of Motivation in Literature

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### Example #1: *Hamlet* (By William Shakespeare)

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All actions that Hamlet commits in the play are the result of his motivation, such as revenge, justification, and integrity of his character. Throughout the play, revenge remains a constant motivation for Hamlet. He is extremely grieved over his father’s death. His sorrow and grief are aggravated when the Ghost of his father tells him that the murderer has not only taken the throne, but has taken his mother as his bride.

This becomes a motivation for Hamlet to justify his actions and exact revenge for “murder most foul,” in the words of the Ghost. This motivation is further escalated when he sees his mother married to his uncle, the

murderer. In fact, Hamlet finds an opportunity to kill his uncle, but he does not, as King Claudius was praying at the time. Hamlet does not want to send the murderer's soul to heaven. This motivation stops him from taking action.

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### **Example #2: *Doctor Faustus* (by Christopher Marlow)**

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In his introductory [soliloquy](#), Dr. Faustus reveals his motivation very clearly. The chorus already confirms whatever he states in the soliloquy. The chorus informs the audiences of the play that Faustus received his academic degree of doctorate in theology (religion). He earned a doctoral degree only to become “overinflated and conceited” for his own satisfaction. His self-centered thinking brings up his [moral](#) and spiritual downfall. He desires to know more and more even something, which is beyond his capabilities. His motivation is pride in himself, which ultimately destroys him.

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### **Example #3: *Lady Macbeth from “Macbeth”* (by William Shakespeare)**

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According to many literary critics about Shakespeare's characters, the most evil of all his female characters is Lady Macbeth, who happens to have the worst motivation behind her actions. She is highly cunning, skillfully manipulative, and much more ambitious than her husband, Macbeth. When she receives a letter from her husband revealing the prophecy of the witches that foretells that Macbeth will be the future king, she at once begins to plan the murder of Duncan.

Then, when Macbeth withdraws from taking action, she motivates and urges him to move forward. Therefore, not only are greed and lust her motivations, but she transfers these motivations to her husband, giving him reason to kill the king.

## **Function of Motivation**

In literature, motivation is used to connect the behavior and actions of a character with the events of the story. Motivation serves as the logical explanation for what a character does, which is necessary for the readers

and audiences to understand the causes of a character's actions. The core desires of characters lead the way to all actions in storytelling.

Sometimes motivations of characters change with the development of the story. With a change in the motivation, the character changes too. For effective [characterization](#), unified and dominant motivation is inevitable. Great characters have great motivations. These characters teach some good or bad moral lessons to the readers and the audiences. The readers and audiences get more interested in motivated characters and understand those motivations, which make or break societies.