Hamlet's Soliloquy Paraphrased for a Modern Audience

1. To be, or not to be— that is the question.
2. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
3. life's problems, as unfair as they are,
4. Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
5. or to fight back and end our troubles
6. And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep--
7. by committing suicide? When we die,
8. No more, and by a sleep to say we end
9. we no longer have to endure
10. The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
11. the pain that is natural
12. That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
13. for humans. Death is an end
14. Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep,
15. truly to be wished for. Eternal sleep!
16. To sleep—perchance to dream. Aye, there's the rub.
17. But we dream in our sleep. Yes, there's the catch.
18. For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
19. For what kind of 'dreams' do we have
20. When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
21. after we die?
22. Must give us pause. There's the respect
23. This question keeps us from killing ourselves. That's why
24. That makes calamity of so long life.
25. we put up with misery in our lives.
26. For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
27. After all, who would endure the problems of life

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18. When he himself might his quietus make
19. if he could find eternal rest
17. With a bare bodkin? . . .
17. merely by using a knife? . . .

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18. But that the dread of something after death.

19. The undiscovered country from whose bourn
19. that mysterious place from which

20. No traveler returns, puzzles the will,
20. no one has ever returned, confuses our choice

21. And makes us rather bear those ills we have
21. and makes us accept our misfortunes

22. Than fly to others that we know not of?
22. rather than risk even greater misfortunes.

23. Thus conscience does make cowards of us all. . . .
23. This fear turns us into cowards. . . .

Informative Summary

Is it better to die or to go on living? Death brings peace, an end to worldly
sorrow, but what if there’s an afterlife? The possibility of greater sorrow after
deat makes us think twice about suicide. We would gladly choose eternal peace
over pain and hardship, if not for our fear of the unknown. This fear turns us
all into cowards and makes us cling to life, however miserable.

Descriptive Summary

In his famous soliloquy, Hamlet reasons himself out of committing suicide.
He first acknowledges the attractiveness of death to someone who has many
problems in life, but then he realizes why most people choose life over death:
they are afraid of the unknown. For those who kill themselves, life after
death might be far worse than life on earth. It is this possibility that
dissuades Hamlet from committing suicide.

Definition of "Paraphrase"

A paraphrase is a rewording/restructuring of a borrowed passage. In a para-
phrase, a writer changes the wording of the original passage, especially
verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, and common nouns. Furthermore, the
writer alters the syntax of the original passage. "Syntax" means "gram-
matical structure" or "arrangement of words."
Accidental Plagiarism

Original passage

"One villain is rising real estate values, which make all that asphalt-covered acreage too expensive to use only at night; a shopping center or housing development can be more profitable" (Clarke and Worrell).

Student paraphrase

The acreage used for drive-ins is too expensive to have only one use. Shopping centers, housing developments, and business complexes are much more profitable (Clarke and Worrell).

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Original passage

"According to the quaint ritual of the time, families would park in the front rows, teen-agers who were just dating would take up the middle rows, and those who were bent on serious petting would head for the darker areas in back" (Clarke and Worrell).

Student paraphrase

Because of tradition families would park in the first few rows, teenagers who had not yet reached the promiscuous stage took up the middle rows, and the serious petters were in the back rows where it was darkest (Clarke and Worrell).

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Original passage

"Most teen-agers now have other ways of find privacy and are less likely to need the excuse of going to the movies" (Clarke and Worrell).

Student paraphrase

Today's teens are much more resourceful and do not need the excuse of going to the drive-in to have sex.