

Student's Name  
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English 231

Term Paper Outline

I. Introduction

A. Freud's definition of the Oedipus Complex

1. stage of development in childhood where children seem to have fallen in love with one parent and developed a hatred for the other  
(<http://ancienthistory.about.com/cs/oedipus/g/OedipalComplex.htm>)

B. James Ramsay considers his father as an adversary and competitor for the love of his mother

C. James despises his father and wishes him dead, but at the end of the novel, he comes to accept his father

1. James has a need for attention from Mrs. Ramsay and dislikes how Mr. Ramsay steals that attention
2. Both James and Mr. Ramsay have a deep need for Mrs. Ramsay's love and compete for that love
3. THESIS: **through** Mrs. Ramsay's death, James's eventual maturity, and Mr. Ramsay's praise of his son, he accepts his father

**Comment:** Include in your central statement something about the Oedipus Complex

II. Body

A. James's intense love for his mother is returned to him; they have a special, loving relationship.

a. James has a deep love for Mrs. Ramsey

1. James admired her
2. "his wife, who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was (James thought)" (4).

b. Mrs. Ramsay returns James's love and admiration

1. She is caring and compassionate
2. "Mrs. Ramsay smoothed out what had been harsh in her manner a moment before, raised his head, and kissed her little boy on the forehead (30).
3. "he was the most gifted, the most sensitive of her children" (58).
4. James was special, and Mrs. Ramsay acknowledged this

B. As strongly as James loves his mother, he just as strongly hates his father.

a. James has an intense hatred towards his father

1. "But his son hated him...disturbed the perfect simplicity and good sense of his relations with his mother" (36-37).

2. according to James, Mr. Ramsay got in the way of his and Mrs. Ramsay's relationship
3. "Had there been an axe handy, or a poker, any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it" (4).
4. James's hatred is so deep that he even contemplates his father's death

b. James wants Mrs. Ramsay to himself

1. He does not want to share Mrs. Ramsay's attention with his father
2. "hoped to recall his mother's attention" (37)

c. Mr. Ramsay doesn't share the love his wife has for their son James

1. Mr. Ramsay doesn't support James' hope of going to the lighthouse
2. "she was certain that he was thinking, we are not going to the Lighthouse tomorrow; and she thought, he will remember that all his life" (62).
3. Mrs. Ramsay feels sorry for her son who desperately wants to go to the Lighthouse

C. Both James and Mr. Ramsay have certain needs for Mrs. Ramsay; they compete for her attention and love

a. Mr. Ramsay is an insecure man begging for sympathy and reassurance

1. "It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius..." (37).
2. Mr. Ramsay doubts his profession and yearns for reassurance from his wife

b. James is not as emotionally demanding as Mr. Ramsay but still loves his mother's attention and is jealous when Mr. Ramsay receives more

1. "He hated him for coming up to them, for stopping and looking down on them; he hated him for interrupting them...(for there he stood, commanding them to attend to him) (36).
2. "disturbed the perfect simplicity and good sense of his relations with his mother" (37).
3. James does not wish to share his mother at all with his father

c. With both her son and her husband battling for her love and attention, Mrs. Ramsay could easily have chosen to serve one, but loves and attends to both.

1. "She stroked James's head; she transferred to him what she felt for her husband" (31).
2. Mrs. Ramsay cares for both her husband and son

D. The pivotal event of Mrs. Ramsay's death along with James's eventual maturity helps bring Mr. Ramsay and James together

a. Mr. Ramsay becomes more insecure and lost as a result of his wife's death

1. He has no one to turn to
2. Mrs. Ramsay is no longer there to console him

3. Now he must rely on his children for comfort
- b. James emotionally matures by the end of the novel
  1. "Only now, as he grew older, and sat staring at his father in an impotent rage, it was not him, that old man reading, whom he wanted to kill, but it was the thing that descended on him" (184).
  2. He realizes it is not his father that he wants to kill, but the mood his father evokes upon him
  3. This realization is a result of his maturity
- c. Mr. Ramsay praises his son for the first time
  1. "Well done!" James had steered them like a born sailor (206).
  2. This simple statement of praise represents Mr. Ramsay's final acceptance of his son
  3. James's strong hatred toward his father softens because of this event
  4. James had been longing for acceptance and praise from his father
  5. "he was so please that...his father had praised him" (206).

### III. Conclusion

- A. James and Mr. Ramsay are similar in that they first compete for Mrs. Ramsay's love and attention.
- B. They have serious needs for acceptance and reassurance from Mrs. Ramsay
- C. Mrs. Ramsay's death is the turning point which helps James to soften his hatred and for Mr. Ramsay to accept his son.