To be or not to be

To be or not to be is one of the most famous soliloquy written by William Shakespeare. It starts with a question to be or not to be.

The structure has been organized according to posing a question and in front of such question, the playwright seems to offer two options that are indeed two ways of answering. In the soliloquy there are many questions. Each question give birth of further one.

Wright from the very first line, punctuation plays a very important role because the speaking voice poses him self a question and it is expressed with a perception verb to be.

The first element the intelligent reader should dig into is why Shakespeare decided to use the verb to be instead of to live. He uses to be because it widens the possible connotations. Also, to be is an infinitive verb because it doesn’t have an end, so the playwright wanted to extend the problem to all world. (in the middle ages suicide was considered a big sin) indeed, this question made Shakespeare a renaissance character.

The colon after the question in the first line, has the purpose to clarify what the problem is. The problem is that he has to decide whether to be/exist or to put an end in his life/die, so the problem is life. Either you surrender or fight the battle of life. Hamlet perceives life as something to defend from (slings and arrows are the two word uses by the speaking voice and they belong to the semantic field of battles). From the very first line the intelligent reader understands that life is a mixture of troubles, battles, difficulties that you have to cope it.

Life and death are the two key words that are in an argumentative contrast.

The speaking voice starts with considering to die.” To die is to sleep no more”, so to sleep is either a metaphor for death or to be dead. What hamlet is trying to say that life is connoted as suffering that may come from the heart or the flash instead of dying that can be considered as a consolation.