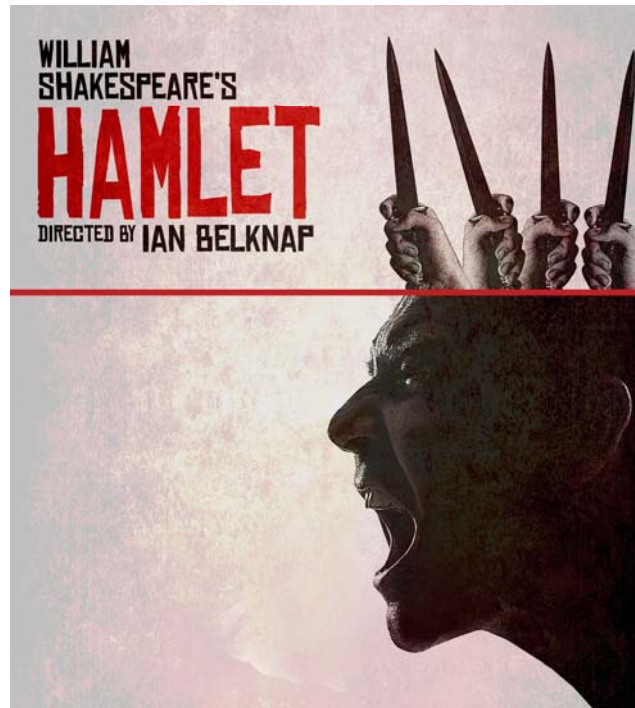


# the Act ings

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## HAMLET

By William Shakespeare  
Directed by Ian Belknap

Teacher Resource Guide by Paul Michael Fontana

**It is strongly suggested that students read at least some of *HAMLET* before seeing the performance.**



This production is part of *Shakespeare for a New Generation*, a national theater initiative sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest.

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## Section 1: Introduction

Thanks for taking some of your classroom time to work on *HAMLET*! Even though it was written well over 400 years ago, this play asks, in a poetic and ritualistic way the same questions that we ask today. Although your students will enjoy the play without preparation, the experience can be deepened by some pre- and post- performance classroom work.

I have explored *HAMLET* with my English classes in the South Bronx for over 10 years (and I even got to direct a student production once!). I use a variety of methodologies: Close reading, writing-in-role, video clips, improv, etc. Some of what I use is in this Guide.

The exercises in this guide are intended to help you and your students get the most out of the performance of the play The Acting Company is presenting. Please do not feel that you need to do everything in this guide! It provides a wide variety of drama-based teaching techniques that you can use as they are presented or you can adapt for your class or for other pieces of literature. You can experiment with them and add the ones that work for you to your “bag of tricks.”

The education programs of The Acting Company are intended to mirror the mission of the company itself: to celebrate language, to deepen creative exploration, to go places where theater isn’t always available. We try to use the same skills in our outreach programs that actors use in the preparation of a role. Many of the exercises here are adaptations of rehearsal “games” and techniques.

It is the job of actors to glean what they can from theatrical texts and put that harvest to practical use by creating a performance. With the **Common Core** as part of the Academic Landscape, arts-based learning is a way to deepen Critical Thinking. The exercises in this guide are designed to help you to help your students interact with complex texts, gather information from those interactions, note patterns from that information, make inferences based on those patterns, and articulate opinions based on those inferences.

We wish to be of service to you and your students. Please contact us if there is anything we can do for you at 212-258-3111 or e-mail Emily Kugel, Education Associate at [ekugel@theactingcompany.org](mailto:ekugel@theactingcompany.org).

Enjoy the Show!

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## Creating a Common Core Unit that includes HAMLET

### Some Essential Questions that might be the basis for the study of Shakespeare's *HAMLET*:

- When is thought preferable to action? When is action preferable to thought?
- What is the function of Art? Can fiction tell the “truth”? Why or why not?
- How does conflict (external or internal) impact relationships?
- How have cultures throughout history addressed death and the afterlife?
- What is the effect of guilt on a person who has committed a crime or a sin?

## Related Non-Fiction

### “Of Revenge” by Sir Francis Bacon from Essays: Civil and Moral

REVENGE is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of that wrong, putteth the law out of office. Certainly, in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior; for it is a prince's part to pardon. And Solomon, I am sure, saith, It is the glory of a man, to pass by an offence. That which is past is gone, and irrevocable; and wise men have enough to do, with things present and to come; therefore they do but trifle with themselves, that labor in past matters.

There is no man doth a wrong, for the wrong's sake; but thereby to purchase himself profit, or pleasure, or honor, or the like. Therefore why should I be angry with a man, for loving himself better than me? And if any man should do wrong, merely out of ill-nature, why, yet it is but like the thorn or briar, which prick and scratch, because they can do no other.

The most tolerable sort of revenge, is for those wrongs which there is no law to remedy; but then let a man take heed, the revenge be such as there is no law to punish; else a man's enemy is still before hand, and it is two for one.

Some, when they take revenge, are desirous, the party should know, whence it cometh. This is the more generous. For the delight seemeth to be, not so much in doing the hurt, as in making the party repent. But base and crafty cowards, are like the arrow that flieth in the dark. Cosmus, duke of

Florence, had a desperate saying against perfidious or neglecting friends, as if those wrongs were unpardonable; You shall read (saith he) that we are commanded to forgive our enemies; but you never read, that we are commanded to forgive our friends. But yet the spirit of Job was in a better tune: Shall we (saith he) take good at God's hands, and not be content to take evil also? And so of friends in a proportion.

This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal, and do well. Public revenges are for the most part fortunate; as that for the death of Caesar; for the death of Pertinax; for the death of Henry the Third of France; and many more. But in private revenges, it is not so. Nay rather, vindictive persons live the life of witches; who, as they are mischievous, so end they infortunate.

**The Anatomy of Melancholy by Robert Burton (8 February 1577 – 25 January 1640) (published 1621)**

*Melancholy*, the subject of our present discourse, is either in **disposition** or in **habit**.

In **disposition**, is that transitory *Melancholy* which goes and comes upon every small occasion of sorrow, need, sickness, trouble, fear, grief, passion, or perturbation of the mind, any manner of care, discontent, or thought, which causes anguish, dullness, heaviness and vexation of spirit, any ways opposite to pleasure, mirth, joy, delight, causing forwardness in us, or a dislike. In which equivocal and improper sense, we call him melancholy, that is dull, sad, sour, lumpish, ill-disposed, solitary, any way moved, or displeased. And from these melancholy dispositions no man living is free, no Stoic, none so wise, none so happy, none so patient, so generous, so godly, so divine, that can vindicate himself; so well-composed, but more or less, some time or other, he feels the smart of it. Melancholy in this sense is the character of Mortality...

This *Melancholy* of which we are to treat, is a **habit**, a serious ailment, a settled humour, as Aurelianus and others call it, not errant, but fixed: and as it was long increasing, so, now being (pleasant or painful) grown to a habit, it will hardly be removed.

From The Anatomy of Melancholy

When I go musing all alone  
 Thinking of divers things fore-known.  
 When I build castles in the air,  
 Void of sorrow and void of fear,  
 Pleasing myself with phantasms sweet,  
 Methinks the time runs very fleet.  
     All my joys to this are folly,  
     Naught so sweet as melancholy.

When I lie waking all alone,  
 Recounting what I have ill done,  
 My thoughts on me then tyrannise,  
 Fear and sorrow me surprise,  
 Whether I tarry still or go,  
 Methinks the time moves very slow.  
     All my griefs to this are jolly,  
     Naught so mad as melancholy.

“When all are mad, where all are like opprest  
 Who can discern one mad man from the rest?”  
The Anatomy of Melancholy by Robert Burton

## Section 2: HAMLET The Play

**Overall Objective:** The students will have an introduction to the world of William Shakespeare’s play, *HAMLET*

### What do You THINK you know?

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

**Objective:**

- The students will explore their foreknowledge of Shakespeare’s *HAMLET*.

**Exercise:** They’ve heard about it since they were little kids, so have the students brainstorm a list of the types of characters, situations, emotions, themes, locations, and images they think might be included in the play *HAMLET*. Write the list on newsprint. Side-coach answers from the ones they give (ex. If they have asserted that there’s ghost, you might get them to infer that there must have been some death or murder preceding the ghost becoming a ghost.)

### Marketing: Judging a Book by its Cover (or a Play by its Poster)

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

**Objective:**

- The students will discuss their expectations of *HAMLET* from looking at the words and images on the cover of the play script.
- The students will discuss the choices made by publishers and executives to put the images and words on the cover.

**Exercise:** Bring in a few different copies of the script of *HAMLET*. Ask the students to look at the cover of their copy and the other copies in the room. Ask them to share with the class images on the covers. What function do those images have? Note the colors on the cover. What do the colors mean and why were they chosen? Do these images help sell this edition? What words did the publishers choose to put on the cover? In what font is the title of the play? What other words or phrases are on the cover? Do these words and phrases help sell this edition? Are you more likely to buy a book or magazine based on images or words? Are there images and words on the back cover? Which is bigger: Shakespeare's name or the title? Did the publisher feel the title would help sell copies of the play or are people buying Shakespeare's name?

## Characters in HAMLET

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

### Objective:

- The students will be familiar with the characters in the play.
- The students will make assumptions about characters based on their names.

**Exercise:** Reproduce the following page for the class from the Reproducibles in the Appendix. Approaching it as if we have never heard anything about these characters, discuss what each of the names makes us feel about them. From what language are the names derived? What consonants are featured in their names? What vowels? Ask the students to play with ways of saying the names. Are the names Danish?

How are the characters grouped in this list? Traditionally, characters in the cast list of Elizabethan plays were listed by rank. What are the hierarchies here? How are they grouped, listed, ranked, hierarchized in your edition?

To get the students active and to better visualize the groups, you may place them in groups, physically, as the characters. Then put Hamlet with his allies and Claudius with his. Where does Ophelia go? Where does Gertrude?

### The Characters in *HAMLET*

Claudius, King of Denmark

Gertrude, Queen of Denmark

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

Polonius, Chief Counselor to the King

Ophelia, Polonius' daughter

Laertes, his son

Osric, a courtier at Claudius' court

Voltemand, a courtier at Claudius' court

Cornelius, a courtier at Claudius' court

Rosencrantz, a childhood friend of Hamlet

Guiltenstern, a childhood friend of Hamlet

Francisco, a guard at Elsinore

Bernardo, a guard at Elsinore

Marcellus, a guard at Elsinore

Reynaldo, a servant of Polonius

Priest

Fortinbras, Prince of Norway

Horatio, a friend of Hamlet at Wittenberg

First Player/Player King, an actor

Player Queen, an actor

Player Lucianus, an actor

Gentlewoman

First Gravedigger

Second Gravedigger

## The Plot

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

### Objective:

- The students will discuss their reactions to the plot of *HAMLET*.
- The students will compare the plot to their expectations for the story.  
**Facts:** Shakespeare's plays, including *HAMLET*, are written in five acts. It is not known whether, during performances at Elizabethan theaters, there were full intermissions during these acts, brief musical interludes or if the play went on for two hours with no pauses.

### Synopsis

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, has multiple woes. The ghost of his father haunts Elsinore; his uncle, Claudius, has married Queen Gertrude, his mother, and assumed the throne; and Fortinbras of Norway threatens Denmark with an invading army. At the urging of his friend Horatio and two soldiers, Hamlet meets the ghost and his dead father reveals that Claudius poisoned him—and the ghost demands that Hamlet exact revenge. Hamlet is unsure whether the ghost is telling the truth. In order to carry this out, Hamlet decides to feign madness. He scorns the affections of Ophelia, daughter of Polonius, to whom he had made romantic overtures. Polonius grows concerned over the apparent insanity that has beset Hamlet and reveals it to the King and Queen. Meanwhile, Hamlet struggles to convince himself that Claudius is the murderer of his father, and in an attempt to "catch the king's conscience," Hamlet convinces a traveling troupe of actors to perform a play in which the action



closely resembles the events related to him by the ghost.

While Hamlet, judging the reaction of Claudius, is convinced of the new king's guilt. Instead, Hamlet rebukes Gertrude with the news that she is sleeping with the killer of her husband. Unfortunately, Polonius—who is hidden behind a tapestry in the Queen's chamber, eavesdropping—panics and cries for help; Hamlet stabs him, thinking it is Claudius. Of course, when this news is given to Claudius, the King sends Hamlet to England with the ostensible purpose of securing Hamlet's safety and the recovery of his senses. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two childhood friends of Hamlet's who are now little more than spies for Claudius, are to accompany him. The trick is that Hamlet will bear a letter to the King of England in which Claudius asks England to sentence Hamlet to death.

In the midst of these events, Ophelia loses her own sanity; she is driven to madness by the death of Polonius at Hamlet's hands. Laertes, her brother, returns to Elsinore from his studies and vows his vengeance upon Hamlet for what the prince has done to his family. News is brought that Hamlet has returned to Denmark, much to the surprise of Claudius, and that Ophelia has drowned herself in a river. Claudius now plots with Laertes to kill Hamlet upon his return to Elsinore. Meanwhile, Hamlet meets Horatio, his truest friend, and tells how he altered the letter so that the execution order was for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern instead of him. At the end of Hamlet's tale, Ophelia's funeral procession enters, and Laertes and Hamlet confront one another. Laertes challenges Hamlet to a duel.

This is all part of Claudius's plot; instead of dull blades, Laertes will select a sharp one. In addition, Laertes is to poison the tip of his blade so that a wound will kill the prince. And, just in case the previous measures are not enough, Claudius will keep a poisoned chalice from which Hamlet will drink. The plan goes awry from the beginning; Laertes is unable to wound Hamlet during the first pass. Between rounds, Gertrude raises a toast to Hamlet with the poisoned chalice. Then, in the heat of the duel, Laertes manages to wound Hamlet but loses the poisoned rapier to him, and Laertes himself is poisoned as well. Gertrude swoons to her death; Laertes falls and reveals the plot against Hamlet, telling him he has "not a half-hour's life" in him. Enraged, Hamlet stabs Claudius with the poisoned foil, then makes him drink from the chalice that slew Gertrude. This done, Hamlet collapses and dies in Horatio's arms as Fortinbras enters the castle. Fortinbras is left to rule Denmark, as the entire royal family is dead, and he bids his men give Hamlet and the rest a proper funeral.

## Exposition: “You are as good as a prologue”

This exercise is designed to be used BEFORE seeing the play!

### Objectives:

- The students will do a close reading of two speeches from *HAMLET*.
- The students will write some expository dialogue.

One of the trickiest jobs of a writer of dramatic literature is telling the audience, at the start of the play (or screenplay), what has happened before the story began. This information is called “exposition.” A novel can use a narrator to deliver exposition. The tricky part is not making the audience feel as if they are being stuffed with lots of information.

**Exercise:** It is important in *HAMLET* for the audience to understand the political situation of Denmark as the play begins. Ask the students to read the selections from Act One, scenes 1 and 5 of *HAMLET* below and analyze Shakespeare’s strategies for conveying the exposition to the audience.

What do you learn in each speech?

Does it seem forced or is it smoothly revealed?

Selection 1:

### **KING CLAUDIUS**

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom  
To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature  
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,  
Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state  
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,  
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
In equal scale weighing delight and dole;  
Taken to wife.  
Now follows that you know: young Fortinbras,  
Holding a weak supposal of our worth  
Hath not failed to pester us with message  
Importing the surrender of those lands  
Lost by his father  
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.

Selection 2:

### **GHOST**

Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,  
My custom always of the afternoon,  
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
With juice of cursed hemlock in a vial,  
And in the porches of my ears did pour  
The leperous distilment;  
Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand  
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd:  
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,  
No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
With all my imperfections on my head:  
O, horrible, O, horrible, most horrible!

Selections are from HAMLET, Act One, scene 2 and Act One, scene 5

After exploring the speeches and gathering facts, you may wish to challenge your students to write a brief expository speech about the events leading up to, say, “Little Red Riding Hood” or “The Three Bears”. What does the audience need to know? How can writers tell them without a narrator?

## Themes in HAMLET

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

### Objective:

- The students will explore some themes in *HAMLET*.

The Royal Shakespeare Company has provided this list of references to some of the themes that emerge in a scholarly reading of *HAMLET*. See [RSC.org.uk](http://RSC.org.uk)

### **Moral corruption** and the consequent dysfunction of family and state

Some related scenes:

- Act 1, Scene 2: King Claudius and Queen Gertrude urge Hamlet to raise his spirits; alone on stage he expresses his outrage at his mother’s speedy remarriage to his uncle.
- Act 1, Scene 5: The Ghost tells his son how he was murdered by his brother.
- Act 3, Scene 2: The performance of the Mousetrap play appears to reveal Claudius's guilt.
- Act 3, Scene 4: Hamlet confronts his mother with her disloyalty and mistakenly kills Polonius.
- Act 4, Scene 3: Claudius sends orders to England that Hamlet be put to death.
- Act 4, Scene 5: Laertes, furious at the death of his father and his sister's madness, swears vengeance.
- Act 5, Scene 2: Claudius’s plotting results in the death of most of the major characters.

### **Revenge** and the complexity of taking revengeful action

Some related scenes:

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- Act 1, Scene 5: Hamlet promises his father to revenge his murder but laments the responsibility he now bears.
- Act 2, Scene 2: Hamlet berates his own passivity and contrasts it with the passion of the Player for long-dead, legendary figures like Hecuba.
- Act 3, Scene 3: Coming upon Claudius confessing the murder while trying to pray, Hamlet thinks decides not to kill the king when he is penitent.
- Act 3, Scene 4: The Ghost visits Hamlet while he is with Gertrude and reminds him he has not yet revenged his murder.
- Act 4, Scene 5: In contrast to Hamlet's reflectiveness, Laertes determines on revenge without hesitation.
- Act 5, Scene 2: Claudius's plot results in the death of most of the major characters. Before he dies, Hamlet kills Claudius.

**Appearance and reality** and the difficulty of discovering and exposing the truth in a corrupt society

Some related scenes:

- Act 1, Scene 3: Polonius instructs Ophelia to disassociate herself from Hamlet who he insists does not love her whatever he says.
- Act 2, Scene 1: Ophelia, distraught, tells her father of Hamlet's recent bizarre behavior and Polonius speculates that Hamlet is crazy with love.
- Act 2, Scene 2: Polonius tells Gertrude and Claudius of Hamlet's strange behavior and they agree to watch him secretly. Polonius talks with Hamlet who appears to be mad. Later in the scene Hamlet concocts his plan to trick the king with the Mousetrap scene, performed by the travelling players.
- Act 3, Scene 1: In the 'nunnery scene' Ophelia is bewildered by Hamlet's contradictory assertions and his anger and mourns the 'noble mind' that has been 'o'erthrown.'
- Act 3, Scene 2: The performance of the Mousetrap play appears to reveal Claudius's guilt.
- Act 3, Scene 4: Hamlet demands his mother face the truth of her disloyalty and says he will not trust Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, knowing they have been dishonest in their dealings with him.
- Act 4, Scene 7: Claudius concocts a plot with Laertes to kill Hamlet.

**Mortality** and the mystery of death

Some related scenes:

- Act 1, Scene 1: Marcellus and Bernardo tell Horatio that they have seen the ghost of old Hamlet. Horatio is skeptical until the ghost appears.
- Act 1, Scene 4: Horatio, Marcellus and Hamlet meet the ghost. Hamlet is unsure whether this is truly his father or an evil spirit, but insists that either way it cannot harm his immortal soul.
- Act 3, Scene 1: Hamlet debates the question of whether suicide is an effective solution to the pain he is experiencing: the difficulty is that we do not know what to expect in an afterlife.
- Act 5, Scene 1: Hamlet talks with the gravediggers and considers that even great men become dust.

**One additional theme to watch in The Acting Company's production is Guilt and its destructive effects.**

## **Symbols and Motifs in HAMLET**

**This exercise is designed to be used BEFORE seeing the play!**

### **Objective:**

- The students will explore some symbols in *HAMLET*

Similarly, the Royal Shakespeare Company has provided this list of references to some of the symbols and motifs that emerge in a scholarly reading of HAMLET. See RSC.org.uk

**Disease, rotting, decay** as the manifestation and consequence of moral corruption.

For example:

- 'Things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely' Act 1, Scene 2
- 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark' Act 1, Scene 4
- 'Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected, / With Hecate's ban trice blasted, thrice infected' Act 3, Scene 2
- 'O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven' Act 3, Scene 3
- 'In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, / Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty' Act 3, Scene 4
- 'It warms the very sickness in my heart / That I shall live and tell him to his teeth, / "Thus didest thou" Act 4, Scene 7
- 'Faith, if 'a be not rotten before'a die (as we have many pocky corsers now-a-days that will scarce hold the laying in...)' Act 5, Scene 1

**Actors and the theatre** as highlighting the deception, illusion and role-playing of major characters in the play; also as holding a mirror up to nature, exposing the corruption of the court.

For example:

- 'These indeed seem, / For they are actions that a man might play; But I have that within which passeth show - / These but the trappings and the suits of woe' Act 1, Scene 2
- 'He that plays the king shall be welcome' Act 2, Scene 2
- 'Is it not monstrous that this player here, / but in a fiction, in a dream of passion...?' Act 2, Scene 2
- 'Suit the action to the word, the word to the action...for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing...to hold...the mirror up to nature' Act 3, Scene 2
- "The Mousetrap"...This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna' Act 3, Scene 2

**Ears and hearing** as needed to discover the truth in such a corrupt and dangerous world; also as vehicles for murder and for distortion of the truth.

For example:

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- 'I think I hear them. Stand ho! Who is there?' Act 1, Scene 1
- 'Sit down awhile, / And let us once again assail your ears' Act 1, Scene 1
- 'So I have heard and do in part believe it' Act 1, Scene 5
- 'List, list, O, list! / If thou didst ever thy dear father love' Act 1, Scene 5
- 'Speak. I am bound to hear' Act 1 Scene 5
- 'And in the porches of my ears did pour / The leperous distilment' Act 1, Scene 5
- 'Will the King hear this piece of work?' Act 3, Scene 2
- 'We beg your hearing patiently' Act 3, Scene 2
- 'Withdraw; I hear him coming' Act 3, Scene 4
- 'O, speak to me no more! / These words like daggers enter in mine ears' Act 3, Scene 4
- 'I pray you Mark' Act 4, scene 5

## Section 3: The Language of HAMLET

**Overall Objective:** The students will have an introduction to the world of William Shakespeare’s play, *HAMLET*.

### Verse and Prose: “I am ill at these numbers”

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

**Objective:**

- The students will discover the differences between **verse** and **prose** in *HAMLET*.
- The students will learn the literary terms **iambic Pentameter**, **Blank Verse**, and **Rhyming Couplet**.

**Facts:** Some of what Shakespeare wrote is in verse. Some of the verse is in iambic Pentameter. Pentameter is a line of poetry having five metrical feet (“Penta-” is the prefix meaning five; as in Pentagon). An iamb is a metrical foot having two syllables, the first one short, and the second long.

So, iambic Pentameter feels like a heartbeat: Short, **Stressed**; Short, **Stressed**; Short, **Stressed**; Short, **Stressed**.

**Exercise:** As the students to place their hand on their hearts and beat out the rhythm of the iambic Pentameter. Then ask them to say the following phrases and beat out the rhythm:

I am, I am, I am, I am, I am

Then:

I am a pirate with a wooden leg.

or, traditionally marked something like this:

u / u / u / u / u /  
I am a pirate with a wooden leg.

Then ask volunteers to try to create an iambic line. We often start with “I am so **glad** to **see** you **here** today.” Note that the VERB usually falls on a stressed syllable.

Much of the verse in Shakespeare’s plays rhymes, however **Blank Verse** is a kind of poetry that does not rhyme, and is written in iambic Pentameter.

One example from Act 1, scene 2 of the play:

HAMLET

u / u / u / u / u /

A little **more** than **kin** and **less** than **kind**.

Act 1, scene 2

The regularity of the verse seems to indicate a controlled, logical mind.

Occasionally, a character will speak in verse lines that somehow have disrupted iambic pentameter. For example, look at the difference in Laertes when he confronts Claudius about his father's death:

**LAERTES**

How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with.

He has had plenty of time to deal with his grief and strategize as he sailed from France. But when he sees his sister Ophelia in her madness, the regularity is lost:

**LAERTES**

O rose of May,  
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia,  
O heavens, is't possible a young maid's wits  
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?

Some of the verse is in **Rhyming Couplets**, pairs of lines of iambic Pentameter that rhyme. Many comic scenes are all couplets and Romeo and Juliet speak in rhymed verse (though not couplets) in their first meeting. The last two lines of the passage below are a rhyming couplet. The rhyming couplet was often used at the end of scenes (as this one is) to indicate to the audience, the other actors and the crew that the scene is over.

**HAMLET**

I'll have grounds  
More relative than this: the play 's the **thing**  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the **king**.  
Act 2, scene 2

Some of the characters in Shakespeare speak in **Prose**. Prose is common language that does not necessarily have an underlying rhythmical sound to it. Usually servants or the lower classes speak prose in Shakespeare's plays. Letters (except when the letter is a poem) are in prose. The insane speak in prose – like Ophelia (and those who pretend to be mad, like Edgar in *KING LEAR*). If the regularity of the verse indicates a controlled, logical mind, does prose show something less controlled?



**Exercise:** You may wish to trace when Hamlet uses prose and verse. For example, “To be or not to be...” is in verse, but Hamlet switches to speaking in prose when he speaks to Ophelia in the same scene.

**Exercise:** Ask the students to look at the script of *HAMLET*. Point out the groups of lines that are indented on the left margin and are rough on the right margin. These are the lines of verse. Some of them rhyme, and some do not. What sorts of characters speak in verse? What sorts of characters speak in prose? When do characters switch for verse to prose or prose to verse?

## Operative Words: “Pluck out the heart of my mystery”

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

**Objective:**

- The students will employ scansion to find operative words.
- The students will use operative words to clarify the speaker’s objective.

Exercise: Ask the students to look at the following piece of Act One, scene 5. Have them scan the verse out. Shakespeare has arranged it (or that’s just how English works) so that the **MOST** important words fall on the **STRESSED** syllables.

**GHOST**

If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;  
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be  
A couch for luxury and damned incest.  
But, howsoever thou pursues this act,  
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive  
Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven  
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge  
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!  
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,  
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:  
Adieu, adieu, adieu, remember me.

Act One, scene 5

Some of the words will jump out. Some words will break the iambic pentameter. Verse lines **WANT** to be regular. If they won’t scan regularly, then they probably are meant to draw some special focus in the audiences’ ears. Let the students play with the text and come up with some operative words. **VERBS** are usually on stressed syllables. They are **ALWAYS** very important and should be paid attention to. When in doubt – especially in those long Shakespearean sentences – look to the verbs for guidance.

One more thing, some students just can’t hear the beat and have a hard time feeling the stressed and unstressed syllables.

Oh, and here's my scan. You should do your own.

**GHOST**

/ u u / u / u / u /

If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not; (I think the "If" should be stressed.)

u / u / u / u / u /

Let not the royal bed of Denmark be ("royal" "bed" "Denmark" all pop here)

u / u / u / u / u

A couch for luxury and damned incest.

(Does the inverted last foot draw audience attention to "incest"?)  
(does your script say "damned"? Why or why not?)

u / u / u / u / u /

But, howsoever thou pursues this act,

/ u u / u / u / u /

Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive

(Don't worry too much about the inverted first foot)

u / u / u / / u u / u

Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven (A funky scan: what might it mean?)

u / u / u / u / u /

And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge ("thorns" & "lodge" seem key)

u / u / u / u / u /

To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once! ("prick" & "sting" pop out)

u / u / u / u / u /

The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,

u / u / u / u / u /

And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire: ("uneffectual" has 3 not 4 syllables here?)

u / u / u / u / u /

Adieu, adieu, adieu, remember me.

**Soundscape: The Very Witching Time**

This exercise is designed to be used BEFORE seeing the play!

**Objective:**

- The students will examine a passage from *HAMLET*.
- The students will create a soundscape illustrating the description.

**Exercise:** In Act 3, scene 2, Hamlet describes his state as midnight approaches and he readies himself to confront his mother. Hamlet's vivid description helps provide a clue into his mental state for the audience and helps us understand what motivates the actions he's about to take.

Ask the students to read this description. Assign each section of the verse (indicated by letters) to a small group of students and ask them to create a “soundscape” of their line. Using sound only, they will convey the mood and meaning of the line. The sounds do NOT need to be realistic, but could abstractly convey the spirit of Hamlet’s description. After a few minutes, read the passage aloud as they present the soundscape under it, adding each sound to the cacophony as you continue to read.

**HAMLET**

- a. Tis now the very witching time of night,
- b. when churchyards yawn
- c. and hell itself breathes out contagion to this world.
- d. Now could I drink hot blood,
- e. and do such bitter business
- f. as the day would quake to look on.
- g. Soft! now to my mother.
- h. O heart, lose not thy nature...
- i. I will speak daggers to her, but use none.

HAMLET, Act 3, scene 2

## Thoughts: “Wild and whirling words”

This exercise is designed to be used BEFORE seeing the play!

Objectives:

- The students will do a close reading of a speech from **HAMLET** with a focus on separating the character’s thoughts.
- The students will discuss the products of the close reading.
- The students will speak the speech with a variety of emotional descriptions as a guide.

Actors, like students, must read closely and look for clues in their texts and analyze the information there. For actors, they use that information to create the characters and tell stories.

**Exercise:** Give the students a copy of the speech below as a handout (there is a copy in the Reproducibles Section at the end of the guide). Ask them to put a // any time Hamlet has a new thought. (ex: “To be, // or not to be: // that is the question:” or “To be, or not to be: // that is the question.” or “To be, or not to be: that is the question:” – all are valid.). Punctuation can be a key to figuring out thoughts. Different editions of the play will have different punctuation. This is the punctuation as used in this production by The Acting Company.

After everyone has finished, discuss and compare the analysis. Try to come to consensus on, perhaps, the first few lines (up to “end them”). Ask a student to read it, on his feet. Another to read it and walk to a different part of the room

on each new thought. A third to read it with a series of different intentions. We like to use the descriptors found in Laban notation for dance. Some of these include: gliding, elevating, sinking, pushing, pulling, floating, wringing, squeezing, dabbing, splatting, lurching, popping, pinching, punching, darting, stabbing, grabbing, flitting, twitching, twinkling, throwing, slicing, slashing, and striking.

So, it might go like this:

Teacher	Student
pulling	To be,
floating	or not to be:
grabbing	that is the question:

**HAMLET**

To be, or not to be: that is the question:  
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
 And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;  
 No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
 The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
 That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation  
 Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;  
 To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;  
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
 Must give us pause: there's the respect  
 That makes calamity of so long life;

**Close Reading for Clues: “Well, we shall sift him...”**

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

**Objectives:**

- The students will do a close reading of a speech from *HAMLET*.

Actors, like students, must read closely and look for clues in their texts and analyze the information there. For actors, they use that information to create the characters and tell stories.

**Exercise:** Taking the skills we’ve been developing in this section (scansion, operative words, thoughts, imagery, etc.) and the elements of have students writing such as Diction (word choice), Detail, Syntax (sentence shape and punctuation), and Tone do a close reading of the speech below.

Some questions to guide your students:

- Verse or prose?

- Is the iambic regular or irregular?
- What operative words come into focus?
- What does the punctuation tell us? Note the caesuras.
- What is Hamlet physically doing?
- What images does he use for his father? To whom does he compare him?
- What images does he use for his uncle? To what does he compare him?

**HAMLET (to his mother, QUEEN GERTRUDE)**

Look here upon this picture, and on this,  
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.  
See, what a grace was seated on this brow,  
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove,  
A combination and a form indeed  
Where every god did seem to set his seal,  
To give the world assurance of a man:  
This was your husband. Look you now, what follows:  
Here is your husband like a mildew'd ear  
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?  
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,  
And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?  
You cannot call it love.  
For at your age the heyday and the blood  
Is tame. It's humble and waits upon the  
Judgment; and what judgment would step from this to this?

Act Three, scene 4

## Still Images: All The World's A Stage

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

**Objectives:**

- The students will do a close reading of a speech from *HAMLET*.
- The students will create tableaux based on images in the speech.
- The students will create a movement piece based on the speech.

**Exercise:** Polonius' "Neither a borrower nor a lender be" speech is one of the most famous passages in *HAMLET*. Provide each student with the following passage from the play. Ask eight students to each take one of the sections of the speech to read aloud and divide the rest of the class among the sections. Introduce the idea of "tableau" to the class.

Tableaux are living sculptures or frozen images made up of living actors' bodies. Tell them that the poses they adopt in their tableau should be both easy to maintain for a few minutes (avoid one foot off the floor, for example) and easy to recreate. Begin with each reader reciting his part in order so the class can get a sense of the whole speech.

Break the class into separate groups by section. The readers and the others should prepare a series of still images to illustrate the passage. Allow them about 10 minutes for this process. Give a warning to the group when they have a minute left and ask the groups to rehearse what they are going to present to the class.

Reconvene the class as a whole and place them in a circle with a playing space in the center. Ask the readers to read the passages in order while the other members of each group present their tableaux. Follow the presentation with a discussion. You may wish to show the whole piece a second time before discussing. If the students are willing and the piece is worthy, you may wish to work their piece into a performance for other classes or to be shown as part of a school assembly.

**POLONIUS**

Give thy thoughts no tongue,  
 Nor any unproportioned thought his act.  
 Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.  
 Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
 Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;  
 Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,  
 Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee.  
 Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;  
 Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.  
 Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  
 But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;  
 For the apparel oft proclaims the man,  
 Neither a borrower nor a lender be;  
 For loan oft loses both itself and friend,  
 And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.  
 This above all: to thine ownself be true,  
 And it must follow, as the night the day,  
 Thou canst not then be false to any man.

HAMLET, Act One, Scene 3

**Text Analysis: “He sings at grave-making?”**

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

**Objective:**

- The students will examine a passage from *HAMLET*.
- The students will examine the humor in a scene.

**Exercise:** The following excerpt from Act Five, scene 1 of *HAMLET*. What are the elements that make this scene funny? Discuss it with the students. What are the required elements to make something funny? Are there different kinds of humor? How many different kinds of humor does Shakespeare employ in

this scene? As students watch television and movies, ask them to look for humor and try to deconstruct why things are funny and what type of humor they are seeing.

**HAMLET**

Whose grave's this, sirrah?

**GRAVEDIGGER**

Mine, sir.

**HAMLET**

I think it be thine, indeed, for thou liest in't.

**GRAVEDIGGER**

You lie out on't, sir, and therefore 'tis not yours. For my part, I do not lie in't, yet it is mine.

**HAMLET**

'Thou dost lie in't, to be in't and say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for the quick. Therefore thou liest.

**GRAVEDIGGER**

'Tis a quick lie, sir; 'twill away gain, from me to you.

**HAMLET**

What man dost thou dig it for?

**GRAVEDIGGER**

For no man, sir.

**HAMLET**

What woman, then?

**GRAVEDIGGER**

For none, neither.

**HAMLET**

Who is to be buried in't?

**GRAVEDIGGER**

One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead.

**HAMLET**

How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

**GRAVEDIGGER**

Of the days i'th' year I came to't that day that our last King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

**HAMLET**

How long is that since?

**GRAVEDIGGER**

Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that! It was that very day that young Hamlet was born - he that is mad, and sent into England. **HAMLET**

Ay, marry. Why was he sent into England?

**GRAVEDIGGER**

Why, because a' was mad. A' shall recover his wits there. Or, if a' do not, 'tis no great matter there.

**HAMLET**

Why?

**GRAVEDIGGER**

'Twill, not be seen in him there. There the men are as mad as he.

**HAMLET**

How came he mad?

**GRAVEDIGGER**

Very strangely, they say.

**HAMLET**

How strangely?

**GRAVEDIGGER**

Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

**HAMLET**

Upon what ground?

**GRAVEDIGGER**

Why, here in Denmark

Act Five, scene 1

**Exercise:** Using this conversation as a model, ask the students to write a humorous conversation between two students in which clear communication is the source of conflict.

## English Speaking Union

### National Shakespeare Competition

If you're interested in getting more of Shakespeare's language into the voices of your students, why not participate in the ESU's National Shakespeare Competition?

High school students across the country read, analyze, perform and recite Shakespearean monologues and sonnets in three qualifying stages: at the school, community and national levels. The ESU provides all the resources you will need to get your school participating in this fun exercise!

For more information, go to:

[http://www.esuus.org/esu/programs/shakespeare\\_competition/](http://www.esuus.org/esu/programs/shakespeare_competition/)



## Section 4: Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Era

### William Shakespeare's Life

**Objective:**

- The students will learn about Shakespeare's life.
- The students will write an essay about writing.
- The students will assess what makes a good story and a good play.
- The students will write a will based on Shakespeare's will.

**Facts:** William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, on or near April 23, 1564. Church records from Holy Trinity Church indicate that he was baptized there on April 26, 1564. William's parents were John Shakespeare, a glover and leather merchant (and sometime politician) and Mary Arden. He married Anne Hathaway (not the movie star) on November 28, 1582. William was 18 at the time and Anne was 26 (and, many believe) pregnant. Their first daughter, Susanna, was born on May 26, 1583. The couple later had twins, Hamnet and Judith, born February 2, 1585 and christened at Holy Trinity Church. Hamnet died in childhood at the age of 11, on August 11, 1596. For seven years, William Shakespeare pretty much disappeared from all records, turning up in London circa 1592.

By 1594, he was not only acting and writing for the Lord Chamberlain's Men (called the King's Men after the accession of James I in 1603), but was a managing partner in the operation as well. With Will Kempe, a master comedian, and Richard Burbage, a leading tragic actor of the day, the Lord Chamberlain's Men (at their rented theatre, The Theatre) became a favorite London troupe, patronized by royalty and made popular by the theater-going public. When the plague forced theater closings in the mid-1590's, Shakespeare and his company made plans for their own space, **The Globe Theater** in the Bankside District, which was across the river from London proper. While Shakespeare could not be accounted wealthy, by London standards, his success allowed him to purchase New House in Stratford and retire there in comfort in 1611.

William Shakespeare allegedly died on his birthday, April 23, 1616 and was buried at Holy Trinity in Stratford on April 25, 1616. Seven years after his death, his friends John Hemings and Henry Condell published a book containing 36 of Shakespeare's plays, called the "**First Folio.**" His work covered many subjects and styles, including comedies, tragedies, romances, and historical plays. Shakespeare was a well-loved writer in his lifetime; and now, 400 years later, he is the most produced playwright in the world.

**Exercise:** There has recently been discussion that, perhaps, William

Shakespeare of Stratford didn't write the plays attributed to him. Lead a discussion of what might lead some people to believe that he COULD NOT POSSIBLY have written these plays and others to assert that he CERTAINLY DID. Some people take into consideration his Middle Class upbringing and his lack of college education. Could the plays have been written without formal schooling?

## Theater in the Time of William Shakespeare

This exercise is designed to be used **AFTER** seeing the play!

### Objectives:

The students will compare modern theatrical convention with theater in the time of Shakespeare.

**Exercise:** Verbally review the list below with the students. After **The Acting Company's** production of *HAMLET*, ask the students to compare the conventions of the theater in Shakespeare's day to the performance they have just seen.

### Theater in the Time of William Shakespeare

- The theater building was open air.
- Performances started at 2:00 to make the most of daylight.
- The stage was usually bare.
- Elizabethan theaters held 1500 - 3000 people.
- There was a balcony onstage called the "inner above" to be used if needed, but most of the action took place downstage.
- When Shakespeare moved to London, he met with actor/manager Richard Burbage and became a prompter, then became an actor and later Burbage's star writer.
- Richard and Cuthbert Burbage opened "The Globe Theatre" in 1599. This was the year that scholars think *HAMLET* was written.
- Shakespeare produced most of his plays in The Globe and became part owner.
- After the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, Shakespeare had to write plays that would please the new King James I who had come from Scotland (one of these is *MACBETH*).
- The Globe burned down in 1613 during a production of Shakespeare's *HENRY VIII*, but then was rebuilt in 1614.
- Characters usually tell us where they are and what time of day it is in their lines.
- Acting was not a well-respected profession at this time.
- Women were not allowed to perform on stage, so boys would perform all female parts, including Ophelia and Gertrude in *HAMLET*. Boys were apprenticed to the acting companies between the ages of 6 and 14.
- Actors would have to learn many parts of a play, since up to three different plays would be performed in the same week by a company.
- Actors usually wore their own clothes unless they were portraying

## Just how many Hamlets are there?

This exercise is designed for use before seeing HAMLET!

**Objective:**

- The students will learn of what the Folio and Quarto editions of Shakespeare's works consist.
- The students will learn to differentiate between differing editions of the plays.

**Facts:** William Shakespeare never published any of his own works. However, in Elizabethan England, copyright laws were, more or less, non-existent. The owners of the theaters also owned the plays which that theater produced. Attempts were made to keep the plays out of publication, so there would not be competition from other theaters however that was easier said than done. Because of this, there are a few different editions of Shakespeare's plays.

The First Folio or "good Folio" edition of Shakespeare's works were first published in 1623 and were the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays. Before this, quarto editions of single plays had been published, but no one had put them all together before. The editors of this edition were two of Shakespeare's friends and fellow actors, John Hemmings and Henry Condell. This edition contains the original spelling (or lack thereof) and punctuation of Shakespeare, both of which are often modernized by editors. Though changed for ease of reading on the left, in the First Folio, "u"s looked like "v"s and vice-versa and "s"s actually looked more like "f"s. You will also notice that the spelling of the same word changes in the folio, this is because there was no set way to spell anything at this point in history.

**HAMLET** – First Folio (1623) To be, or not to be, that is the Question:  
Whether 'tis Nobler in the minde to suffer The Slings and Arrowes of  
outrageous Fortune, Or to take Armes against a Sea of troubles, And by  
opposing end them: to dye, to sleepe No more; and by a sleepe, to say we end  
The Heart-ake, and the thousand Naturall shockes That Flesh is heyre too?  
'Tis a consummation Devoutly to be wish'd. To dye to sleepe, To sleepe,  
perchance to Dreame; I, there's the rub, For in that sleepe of death, what  
dreaumes may come, When we have shuffel'd off this mortall coile, Must give  
us pawse. There's the respect That makes Calamity of so long life: For who  
would beare the Whips and Scornes of time, The Oppressors wrong, the poore  
mans Contumely, The pangs of dispriz'd Love, the Lawes delay, The insolence  
of Office, and the Spurnes That patient merit of the unworthy takes, When he  
himselfe might his Quietus make With a bare Bodkin?

Considered by most scholars to be the "bad Quarto", this 1603 edition of Hamlet was most likely the work of the actor portraying Marcellus. We can assume this because the scenes which involve Marcellus match up very well with the First Folio, yet everything else is rather pieced together and most

likely not Shakespeare’s work. However, this edition of Hamlet is not useless as it is an excellent source of comparison to the First Folio edition and gives modern editors a few different ways to perceive each line of verse.

HAMLET – Quarto 1 (1603) To be, or not to be, I there’s the point, To Die, to sleepe, is that all? I all: No, to sleepe, to dreame, I mary there it goes, For in that dreame of death, when wee awake, And borne before an everlasting Judge, From whence no passenger ever retur’nd, The undiscovered country, at whose sight The happy smile, and the accursed damn’d. But for this, the joyfull hope of this, Whol’d beare the scornes and flattery of the world, Scorned by the right rich, the rich cursed of the poore? The widow being oppressed, the orphan wrong’d, The taste of hunger, or a tyrants raigne, And thousand more calamities besides, To grunt and sweate under this weary life, When that he may his full Quietus make, With a bare bodkin, who would this indure, But for a hope of something after death?

HAMLET – Modern Edition To be, or not to be: that is the question: Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep; No more; and by a sleep to say we end The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir to, ‘tis a consummation Devoutly to be wish’d. To die, to sleep; To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there’s the rub; For in that sleep of death what dreams may come When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause: there’s the respect That makes calamity of so long life; For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely, The pangs of despised love, the law’s delay, The insolence of office and the spurns That patient merit of the unworthy takes, When he himself might his quietus make With a bare bodkin?

## Humours

### Objective:

- The students will know about the belief in Bodily Humours in Elizabethan medicine
- The students will create scenes involving the Humours.
- The students will look for references to the Humours in *HAMLET*

**Facts:** In the time of Shakespeare, people believed that, in the human body, the **humours** were natural bodily fluids that corresponded to the four elements (air, earth, fire, and water) and had various qualities: cold, dry, hot and moist.

Element	Humour	Quality	Nature
Fire	Choler (yellow bile)	hot and dry	Choleric (temperamental)
Air	Blood	hot and moist	Sanguine (jolly, lusty)
Water	Phlegm	cold and moist	Phlegmatic (sluggish, slow)
Earth	Melancholy (black bile)	cold and dry	Melancholic (sad, lovesick)

Many people believed that when the humours were all in balance in a person, he or she is completely healthy. If they got out of balance, illness resulted. Doctors would **bleed** their patients to restore the balance, because blood was considered to have pre-eminence over the other humours.

When a piece of drama involves people with extreme emotions, indicative of imbalances of the Humours, it was considered a “Humourous” piece. Often a modern comedy contains people with heightened emotions and we dub it “humorous.”

**Exercise:** Divide the class into four groups and assign each one of the four Humours. Ask the students to create short scenes in which one or more of the characters are showing signs of an excess of their assigned bodily humour. As they prepare to see the play, they should listen for references to the Humours in *HAMLET* and in other literature.

## Melancholy

**Exercise:** Using the passage from [The Anatomy of Melancholy](#) in the Appendix, have the students classify Hamlet’s melancholy. Here are some quotations that may guide the discussion (also found in the Appendix).

How would 16<sup>th</sup> Century Physician Robert Burton classify Hamlet’s melancholy? Use these quotations:

### QUEEN GERTRUDE

I doubt it is no other but the main;  
His father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage.

### KING CLAUDIUS

... 'tis unmanly grief;  
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,  
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,  
An understanding simple and unschool'd

### HAMLET

I have of late—but wherefore I know not--lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.

### POLONIUS

I precepts gave her,  
That she should lock herself from his resort,  
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.

Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;  
And he, repulsed – a short tale to make –  
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,  
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,  
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,  
Into the madness wherein now he raves,  
And all we mourn for.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

There's something in his soul,  
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood...

**HAMLET**

The spirit that I have seen  
May be the devil: and the devil hath power  
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps  
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  
As he is very potent with such spirits,  
Abuses me to damn me...

**HAMLET**

Seems, madam! nay it is; I know not 'seems.'  
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,  
Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,  
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,  
Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,  
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,  
That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,  
For they are actions that a man might play:  
But I have that within which passeth show;  
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

**LORD POLONIUS**

...but yet do I believe  
The origin and commencement of his grief  
Sprung from neglected love.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off...

**OPHELIA**

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!  
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;  
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,  
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!

## Text-based Improv: Insult-Building

### Objective:

- The students will explore Shakespearean language by constructing insults.

In *HAMLET*, Hamlet calls his Uncle, King Claudius, a “bloody, bawdy villain! Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!” That’s not very nice. But good language is fun to say! Even when words are unfamiliar, the images created and the sounds produced by them makes them useful.

**Exercise:** Give each student a copy of the insult-building worksheet below (reprinted in the Reproducibles section in the Appendix to this guide). To construct a Shakespearean insult, ask them to combine one word from each of the three columns below, and preface it with “Thou.”

Column 1 (Adjectives)	Column 2 (Adjectives)	Column 3 (Nouns)
artless	base-court	apple-john
bawdy	bat-fowling	baggage
beslubbering	beef-witted	barnacle
bootless	beetle-headed	bladder
churlish	boil-brained	boar-pig
cockered	clapper-clawed	bugbear
clouted	clay-brained	bum-bailey
craven	common-kissing	canker-blossom
currish	crook-pated	clack-dish
dankish	dismal-dreaming	clotpole
dissembling	dizzy-eyed	coxcomb
droning	dog-hearted	codpiece
errant	dread-bolted	death-token
fawning	earth-vexing	dewberry
fobbing	elf-skinned	flap-dragon
froward	fat-kidneyed	flax-wench
frothy	fen-sucked	flirt-gill
gleeking	flap-mouthed	foot-licker
goatish	fly-bitten	fustilarian
gorbellied	folly-fallen	giglet
impertinent	fool-born	gudgeon
infectious	full-gorged	haggard
jarring	guts-griping	harpy
loggerheaded	half-faced	hedge-pig
lumpish	hasty-witted	horn-beast
mammering	hedge-born	hugger-mugger
mangled	hell-hated	jolthead
mewling	idle-headed	lewdster
paunchy	ill-breeding	lout
pribbling	ill-nurtured	maggot-pie
puking	knotty-pated	malt-worm
puny	milk-livered	mammet
qualling	motley-minded	measle
rank	onion-eyed	minnow

reeky	plume-plucked	miscreant
ruttish	pox-marked	mumble-news
saucy	reeling-ripe	nut-hook
spleeny	rough-hewn	pigeon-egg
spongy	rude-growing	pignut
surly	rump-fed	puttock
tottering	shard-borne	pumpion
unmuzzled	sheep-biting	ratsbane
vain	spur-galled	scut
venomed	swag-bellied	skains-mate
villainous	tardy-gaited	strumpet
wayward	toad-spotted	vassal
weedy	urchin-snouted	whey-face
yeasty	weather-bitten	wagtail

## Brainstorm: Creating a Theatrical Production

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

### Objective:

- The students will identify careers in the theater.
- The students will use The Acting Company website as a resource.
- The students will know the collaborative nature of theater.

**Exercise:** Ask the students to name some of the people who work to put a theatrical production like *HAMLET* on stage. Write their answers on the board. As the brainstorm continues, present information about the various professions. When you attend the performance, see if your students can talk to some of the professionals associated with **The Acting Company**.

### Producer or Producing Organization

The producers raise the money needed to produce the play - the money allows the Creative Team to build its vision of the play. Producers oversee all aspects of the production and make sure that the play sticks to their artistic standards. They often put together the package of Script, Director, Designers, and Cast. **The Acting Company** is a not-for-profit organization, which means that money to produce the plays comes from fund-raising through grants and donations rather than from investors.

[A “Not-for-Profit” organization uses money raised from donors, foundations, and grants to do its work. A “Profit Making” or “For-Profit” organization gets money from investors. The investors receive a percentage of the profit made by the work.]

### The Playwright

A "wright" is a type of artisan who makes things that people can use. A wheelwright makes wheels. A barrel-wright and a shipwright make their



products. A playwright makes plays. Plays are of use to other artists - Actors, Directors, Designers - who use the script to make their own artistic statement. William Shakespeare is the playwright of *HAMLET*.

### **The Director**

After reading the playwright's script, the director decides on an overall vision for the production. The director meets with the Creative Team to assemble a unified look for the sets, costumes, lighting and other elements. The director oversees the actors in rehearsal, often with the help of Assistant Directors and Stage Managers. In the case of *HAMLET*, director Ian Belknap wanted to bring the script to life in a new way, using primal images to say something specific about the play and its themes.

### **The Actor**

The Cast is the group of men, women and children who perform the play. Many people call all the performers “actors” (instead of “actors” and “actresses”), since this is the professional term that applies to people of both genders. The members of the cast may be seasoned actors or new to the stage. They may have trained at different theater schools that teach acting in various ways. John Skelley, who plays Hamlet, went to drama school at University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater Actor Training Program. Each actor draws on his own experiences and understanding of life to create believable characters.

Actors usually audition for the parts they play. This means that they had to work on the part and read, sing or dance for the director and producers before they were given the role. All of the actors had to memorize their lines and attend many rehearsals, including some with costumes and props, before opening night.

### **Voice, Speech and Text Consultant**

The Shakespearean language in *HAMLET* is very complex. Often a Voice Coach acts as an advisor to the actors and director on the play. Elizabeth Smith is an expert on the text (in this case she is an expert in Shakespeare's language), the meanings and nuances of the words, and their pronunciation. She can assist the actors with the verse. She is an expert in the language of the script and helps the actors approach the text from a unified angle.

### **The Costume Designer**

Costumes in a play must help the actors as they create the characters. The costumes should not restrict the movement of the performers. The costume designer and her staff work within the vision of the director for each character. They choose colors and styles to help the audience better understand the characters. They do historical research to make the time period of the play come to life. One of the specific elements of this play is Hamlet's black clothes which are mentioned in the second scene of the play. In this production of *HAMLET* Candice Donnelly has created fabulous renaissance costumes that please the eye but also tell us about characters' inner lives.

HAMLET Teacher Resource Guide – The Acting Company 34  
Costume Designs by Candice Donnelly



HAMLET



HAMLET



GERTRUDE



OPHELIA



GRAVEDIGGER



PLAYER

### **The Set Designer, the Sound Designer and Lighting Designer**

The play needs an environment in which to take place. The set can be a literal world, with many objects (“props”) and lots of furniture. It can be a suggestion of reality with minimal actual components. Music and sound effects can make the theatrical experience more real (or more fantastical). The lights add to the environment of the play and enhance the mood that the other designers, the actors, the playwright, the composer and the director have created. For The Acting Company productions, the set must be easy to assemble and disassemble and must be portable. The sound and lighting design must be able to be recreated in each venue.

### **The Staff and The Crew**

The theater’s staff - house manager, ushers, box office people, and others - assist the audience in many ways and support each performance. Backstage the Stage Managers and the running crew run the lighting equipment, move the scenery and make sure the technical aspects of the performance are perfect. In the office, Marketing people work to make sure people know about the performances and the Development staff makes sure the producers have money to put on the play.

**Exercise:** Ask the students to see how many of the members of the cast, crew and staff they can find at The Acting Company website:

[www.theactingcompany.org](http://www.theactingcompany.org)

Feel free to have them correspond with the Company members through e-mail links.

## **Why Theater?**

**This exercise is designed to be used BEFORE seeing the play with a follow- up section AFTER the performance.**

**Objective:**

- The students will explore the importance of theater.

**Exercise:** Give each student a copy of the following quote from George Cram Cook (1873 –1924), founder of New York’s Provincetown Playhouse (artistic home of Eugene O’Neill). Ask each student to identify the two reasons Cook gives for the importance of theater, especially in time of crisis. Are they important and relevant today? Are there other reasons?

Ask the students to write a paragraph or two, based on the passage, in which they explore the importance of Theater (or the Arts in general) in our high tech, war-riddled and violent world. Have volunteers share them with the class.

After seeing the performance, ask the students which reason (as a means of escape or as a gateway for imagination) does *HAMLET* provide? Or does it do something else? Can theater provide different things for different people? Can

it provide many things for an individual?

“Seven of the Provincetown Players are in the army or working for it in France and more are going. Not lightheartedly now, when civilization itself is threatened with destruction, we who remain have determined to go on next season with the work of our little theatre. It is often said that theatrical entertainment in general is socially justified in this dark time as a means of **relaxing the strain of reality**, and thus helping to keep us sane. This may be true, but if more were not true - if we felt no deeper value in dramatic art than entertainment, we would hardly have the heart for it now. One faculty, we know, is going to be of vast importance to the half-destroyed world - indispensable for its rebuilding - the faculty of creative imagination. That spark of it, which has given this group of ours such life and meaning as we have, is not so insignificant that we should now let it die. The social justification, which we feel to be valid now for makers and players of plays, is that they shall help **keep alive in the world the light of imagination**. Without it, the wreck of the world that was cannot be cleared away and the new world shaped.”

George Cram Cook, founder of New York’s Provincetown Playhouse, 1918

## Theater Etiquette

**This exercise is designed to be used BEFORE seeing the play!**

**Objective:**

- The students will know standard rules of behavior in the theater.

To make the theater-going experience more enjoyable for everyone, a code of behavior has been established. When attending theatrical performances, remember these simple rules of conduct.

- ❖ Be on time for the performance.
  - ❖ Eat and drink only in the theatre lobby.
  - ❖ Turn OFF all cellular phones, laptops, tablets. NO TEXTING during the show!
  - ❖ Talk before and after the performance or during the intermissions only.
- Remember that the people near you and on stage can hear you.
- ❖ Appropriate responses to the performances, such as laughing and applauding, are appreciated.
  - ❖ Act with maturity during romantic, violent and other challenging scenes.
  - ❖ Keep your feet off chairs around you.
  - ❖ Read your program before or after, not during, the play.
  - ❖ Personal hygiene (e.g., combing hair, applying make-up, etc.) should be attended to in the restrooms.
  - ❖ Once you are seated and the play has begun, stay in your seat. If you see empty seats ahead of you, ask the usher during the intermission if you can move to them.
  - ❖ Always stay until after the curtain call. After the final curtain, relax and take your time leaving.
  - ❖ Open your eyes, ears and mind to the entire theatrical experience!

## Prepare for Q & A Session

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

**Objective:**

- The students will create questions for the post-performance Q & A session.

**Exercise:** To make the post-performance Question and Answer session more beneficial to everyone, the students might create a few questions before the performance. Ask the students to think what questions they might want to ask the actors in the play. Here are some starter questions:

Are there questions about the **theater** as an art form? Does it require training? Where did the actors train? What is the sword fighting like? How do the actors work without microphones? Can a person make a living in the theater? What careers are there in the theater? Are any of the students aspiring actors? Are they seeking advice?

Are there questions about **traveling** the country? Have the actors seen a lot of the United States? What is the bus like? How many hours do they spend on the bus? Does everybody get along?

What about life in **New York City**? Many of the actors make their home there. How long have the actors lived there? And where are they from originally? (Have any of the students ever been in NYC?) What is the best part of living in New York? What is the worst? What's it like in Minnesota (for the MN-based cast members)?

What about **HAMLET**, the play? How has it been received in places across the country? What is the best part about working on this play? What have been its drawbacks? Is it fun working on Shakespeare? What do the actors think the themes of the play are?

**NOTE:** If there are questions that your students have after the company departs, feel free to contact the Education Department of The Acting Company, and we will get an answer for you!

## Section 5: What to Do After You See This Play

Please encourage your students to reflect on the play in some of the following ways. We would love to have copies of some of the writings or artwork your students create: **The Acting Company, Box 898, New York, NY 10108 or fax 212-258-3299**. We have also included in the appendix short pre- and post-performance questionnaires and would be interested in gathering data about the play.

### Write

- Write a play or scene in response to the play.
- Improvise a scene with a partner and then write it down.
- Write a soliloquy for one of the characters in *HAMLET*.
- Write a scene for two of the characters in the play that you think we should have seen but that was not in Shakespeare's play. For example, a scene between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
- Write an epilogue. For example, what happens to Denmark after the story ends? Who's in charge?
- Write a review of our production.
- Write an analysis of the poster for this production.
- Write a theatrical adaptation of another piece of literature, perhaps a short story.

### Draw

- Draw the world of the Elsinore and the world of Hamlet.
- Draw images from the production.
- Draw a new poster for our production.
- Create a collage of images from magazines in response to the play.

### Read and Research more

Check out some of the following Web Addresses:

**Complete Text of the Play:** [www.theplays.org/hamlet/](http://www.theplays.org/hamlet/)

**SparkNotes on the Play:** [www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/hamlet/](http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/hamlet/)

**More Lesson Plans:** <http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=618>

**Shakespeare Online Resource Centers:** [www.bardweb.net](http://www.bardweb.net)

[www.shakespeare-online.com/](http://www.shakespeare-online.com/) [www.navdeeps.com/shakespeare](http://www.navdeeps.com/shakespeare)

<http://renaissance.dm.net/compendium/>

[www.ulen.com/shakespeare/](http://www.ulen.com/shakespeare/)

**National Council of Teachers of English:** <http://www.ncte.org/>

## Writing in Role: King Hamlet's Funeral and a Royal Wedding

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

**Objective:**

- The students will analyze a scene from *HAMLET*.
- The students will write in the voice of a fictional character.

**Exercise:** Ask the students to read Act 1, Scene 2 of *HAMLET* beginning with the Duke's entrance (around line 115). Based on that scene, each student should write as a sportswriter for the The Elsinore Express describing the social event(s) of the season: King Hamlet's Funeral and Queen Gertrude's Wedding. What were the highlights of the two events? What are the reporter's reaction to the events? The reporters should use quotes from the scene to describe what they have seen and heard. For example, The Royal Prince, Hamlet, describes the catering situation, saying, "the funeral baked meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables."

## Casting

This exercise is designed to be used **BEFORE** seeing the play!

**Objective:**

The students will create a cast list for a movie of *HAMLET*.

**Exercise:** Ask the students, "If you were casting a movie of *HAMLET* (and there have been many), what stars would you get to be in it?" Ask each to work independently and cast Hamlet, Ophelia and Polonius. Should Hamlet be sexy or nerdy or famous or unknown? Are there any actual sets of brothers that might be appropriate to play King Claudius and the Ghost?

## Section 6: Cast List and Acting Company Info

The Acting Company in association with The Guthrie Theater  
presents

### **Hamlet**

by **William Shakespeare**

*Scenic Design* **Neil Patel**

*Costume Design* **Candice Donnelly**

*Lighting Design* **Gregg Goff**

*Music and Sound Design* **Michael Kiley**

*Voice and Speech Consultant* **Elizabeth Smith**

*Fight Direction* **Felix Ivanoff**

*Property Master* **Faye Armon-Troncoso**

*Casting* **McCorkle Casting, LTD.**

*Production Stage Manager* **Gina Noele Odierno**

*Assistant Stage Manager* **Brandon Curtis**

*Staff Repertory Director* **Devin Brain**

Directed by  
**Ian Belknap**

### **CAST**

*(in order of appearance)*

Bernardo/Guildenstern/First Gravedigger - Ian Gould

Francisco/Player/Osric - Joshua Johnston

Horatio - Ernest Bentley

Marcellus/Rosencrantz/Gravedigger - Grant Fletcher Prewitt

Claudius - Patrick Lane

Laertes/Ghost - Robert David Grant

Polonius - Andy Nogasky

Hamlet - John Skelley

Gertrude - Jacqueline Correa

Ophelia - Angela Janas

Player King/Fortinbras/Priest - Darien Battle

Player Queen/Female Attendant - Suzy Kohane

This production premiered at Northridge Plaza Del Sol Performance Hall  
on October 3, 2013

*Running time: 2 hours 30 minutes plus intermission*



## We Want to Hear from YOU and your STUDENTS!

### By Mail

The Acting Company, PO Box 898, New York NY 10108  
Telephone: 212-258-3111 Fax: 212-258-3299

### By E-Mail

[education@theactingcompany.org](mailto:education@theactingcompany.org)

### On the Internet

[www.theactingcompany.org](http://www.theactingcompany.org)

Follow the tour as it progresses across the US: visit us on facebook.  
We're also on Twitter!

### Internships

Please submit a letter of interest and your resume along with two references to the Intern Coordinator at the address above. You can call or check the website for more information.

### Feedback and FREE Posters!

Send us your feedback after seeing the play (to address above) and we will send you a POSTER from one of The Acting Company's productions as a "Thank You."

THE ACTING COMPANY WISHES TO THANK ITS SPONSORS: Actors' Equity Foundation, The Actors Fund, The Altman Foundation, The Axe-Houghton Foundation, The Howard Bayne Fund, The Bodman Foundation, Bridges/Larson Foundation, The Broadway League, CITI Private Bank, Noel Coward Foundation, Delta Air Lines, The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, 42nd Street Development Corporation, Fribourg Family Foundation, The Rona Jaffe Foundation, The Dorothea L. Leonhart Foundation, Arthur L. Loeb Foundation, Lucille Lortel Foundation, Marquis George MacDonald Foundation, Inc., The Edith Meiser Foundation, James Starr Moore Foundation, The Morris and Alma Schapiro Fund, Seevak Family Foundation, Shamos Family Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, Sony Corporation of America, The Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, Dorothy Strelsin Foundation, Sullivan & Cromwell, Target, Thomson Reuters, U.S. Trust Bank of America *and other individual, foundation and corporate supporters.*

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## Appendix: Reproducibles

### Related Non-Fiction

“Of Revenge” by Sir Francis Bacon from Essays: Civil and Moral

REVENGE is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of that wrong, putteth the law out of office. Certainly, in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior; for it is a prince's part to pardon. And Solomon, I am sure, saith, It is the glory of a man, to pass by an offence. That which is past is gone, and irrevocable; and wise men have enough to do, with things present and to come; therefore they do but trifle with themselves, that labor in past matters.

There is no man doth a wrong, for the wrong's sake; but thereby to purchase himself profit, or pleasure, or honor, or the like. Therefore why should I be angry with a man, for loving himself better than me? And if any man should do wrong, merely out of ill-nature, why, yet it is but like the thorn or briar, which prick and scratch, because they can do no other.

The most tolerable sort of revenge, is for those wrongs which there is no law to remedy; but then let a man take heed, the revenge be such as there is no law to punish; else a man's enemy is still before hand, and it is two for one.

Some, when they take revenge, are desirous, the party should know, whence it cometh. This is the more generous. For the delight seemeth to be, not so much in doing the hurt, as in making the party repent. But base and crafty cowards, are like the arrow that flieth in the dark. Cosmus, duke of Florence, had a desperate saying against perfidious or neglecting friends, as if those wrongs were unpardonable; You shall read (saith he) that we are commanded to forgive our enemies; but you never read, that we are commanded to forgive our friends. But yet the spirit of Job was in a better tune: Shall we (saith he) take good at God's hands, and not be content to take evil also? And so of friends in a proportion.

This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal, and do well. Public revenges are for the most part fortunate; as that for the death of Caesar; for the death of Pertinax; for the death of Henry the Third of France; and many more. But in private revenges, it is not so. Nay rather, vindictive persons live the life of witches; who, as they are mischievous, so end they infortunate.

## Related Non-Fiction

The Anatomy of Melancholy by Robert Burton (8 February 1577 – 25 January 1640) (published 1621)

(Full title: *The Anatomy of Melancholy, What it is: With all the Kinds, Causes, Symptomes, Prognostickes, and Several Cures of it. In Three Maine Partitions with their several Sections, Members, and Subsections. Philosophically, Medicinally, Historically, Opened and Cut Up*)

*Melancholy*, the subject of our present discourse, is either in **disposition** or in **habit**.

In **disposition**, is that transitory *Melancholy* which goes and comes upon every small occasion of sorrow, need, sickness, trouble, fear, grief, passion, or perturbation of the mind, any manner of care, discontent, or thought, which causes anguish, dullness, heaviness and vexation of spirit, any ways opposite to pleasure, mirth, joy, delight, causing forwardness in us, or a dislike. In which equivocal and improper sense, we call him melancholy, that is dull, sad, sour, lumpish, ill-disposed, solitary, any way moved, or displeased. And from these melancholy dispositions no man living is free, no Stoic, none so wise, none so happy, none so patient, so generous, so godly, so divine, that can vindicate himself; so well-composed, but more or less, some time or other, he feels the smart of it. Melancholy in this sense is the character of Mortality...

This *Melancholy* of which we are to treat, is a **habit**, a serious ailment, a settled humour, as Aurelianus and others call it, not errant, but fixed: and as it was long increasing, so, now being (pleasant or painful) grown to a habit, it will hardly be removed.

From The Anatomy of Melancholy

When I go musing all alone  
Thinking of divers things fore-known.  
When I build castles in the air,  
Void of sorrow and void of fear,  
Pleasing myself with phantasms sweet,  
Methinks the time runs very fleet.  
    All my joys to this are folly,  
    Naught so sweet as melancholy.

When I lie waking all alone,  
Recounting what I have ill done,  
My thoughts on me then tyrannise,  
Fear and sorrow me surprise,  
Whether I tarry still or go,  
Methinks the time moves very slow.  
    All my griefs to this are jolly,  
    Naught so mad as melancholy.

## Characters in HAMLET

Claudius, King of Denmark  
Gertrude, Queen of Denmark  
Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

Polonius, Chief Counselor to the King  
Ophelia, Polonius' daughter  
Laertes, his son

Osric, a courtier at Claudius' court  
Voltmand, a courtier at Claudius' court  
Cornelius, a courtier at Claudius' court

Rosencrantz, a childhood friend of Hamlet  
Guildenstern, a childhood friend of Hamlet  
Francisco, a guard at Elsinore  
Bernardo, a guard at Elsinore  
Marcellus, a guard at Elsinore  
Reynaldo, a servant of Polonius  
Priest

Fortinbras, Prince of Norway

Horatio, a friend of Hamlet at Wittenberg

First Player/Player King, an actor  
Player Queen, an actor  
Player Lucianus, an actor  
Gentlewoman

First Gravedigger  
Second Gravedigger

## Synopsis

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, has multiple woes. The ghost of his father haunts Elsinore; his uncle, Claudius, has married Queen Gertrude, his mother, and assumed the throne; and Fortinbras of Norway threatens Denmark with an invading army. At the urging of his friend Horatio and two soldiers, Hamlet meets the ghost and his dead father reveals that Claudius poisoned him—and the ghost demands that Hamlet exact revenge. Hamlet is unsure whether the ghost is telling the truth. In order to carry this out, Hamlet decides to feign madness. He scorns the affections of Ophelia, daughter of Polonius, to whom he had made romantic overtures. Polonius grows concerned over the apparent insanity that has beset Hamlet and reveals it to the King and Queen. Meanwhile, Hamlet struggles to convince himself that Claudius is the murderer of his father, and in an attempt to "catch the king's conscience," Hamlet convinces a traveling troupe of actors to perform a play in which the action closely resembles the events related to him by the ghost.

While Hamlet, judging the reaction of Claudius, is convinced of the new king's guilt. Instead, Hamlet rebukes Gertrude with the news that she is sleeping with the killer of her husband. Unfortunately, Polonius—who is hidden behind a tapestry in the Queen's chamber, eavesdropping—panics and cries for help; Hamlet stabs him, thinking it is Claudius. Of course, when this news is given to Claudius, the King sends Hamlet to England with the ostensible purpose of securing Hamlet's safety and the recovery of his senses. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two childhood friends of Hamlet's who are now little more than spies for Claudius, are to accompany him. The trick is that Hamlet will bear a letter to the King of England in which Claudius asks England to sentence Hamlet to death.

In the midst of these events, Ophelia loses her own sanity; she is driven to madness by the death of Polonius at Hamlet's hands. Laertes, her brother, returns to Elsinore from his studies and vows his vengeance upon Hamlet for what the prince has done to his family. News is brought that Hamlet has returned to Denmark, much to the surprise of Claudius, and that Ophelia has drowned herself in a river. Claudius now plots with Laertes to kill Hamlet upon his return to Elsinore. Meanwhile, Hamlet meets Horatio, his truest friend, and tells how he altered the letter so that the execution order was for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern instead of him. At the end of Hamlet's tale, Ophelia's funeral procession enters, and Laertes and Hamlet confront one another. Laertes challenges Hamlet to a duel.

This is all part of Claudius's plot; instead of dull blades, Laertes will select a sharp one. In addition, Laertes is to poison the tip of his blade so that a wound will kill the prince. And, just in case the previous measures are not enough, Claudius will keep a poisoned chalice from which Hamlet will drink. The plan goes awry from the beginning; Laertes is unable to wound Hamlet during the first pass. Between rounds, Gertrude raises a toast to Hamlet with the poisoned chalice. Then, in the heat of the duel, Laertes manages to wound Hamlet but loses the poisoned rapier to him, and Laertes himself is poisoned as well. Gertrude swoons to her death; Laertes falls and reveals the plot against Hamlet, telling him he has "not a half-hour's life" in him. Enraged, Hamlet stabs Claudius with the poisoned foil, then makes him drink from the chalice that slew Gertrude. This done, Hamlet collapses and dies in Horatio's arms as Fortinbras enters the castle. Fortinbras is left to rule Denmark, as the entire royal family is dead, and he bids his men give Hamlet and the rest a proper funeral.

Adapted from Bardweb.net  
Shakespeare Resource Center

**HAMLET (to his mother, QUEEN GERTRUDE)**

Look here upon this picture, and on this,  
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.  
See, what a grace was seated on this brow,  
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove,  
A combination and a form indeed  
Where every god did seem to set his seal,  
To give the world assurance of a man:  
This was your husband. Look you now, what follows:  
Here is your husband like a mildew'd ear  
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?  
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,  
And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?  
You cannot call it love.  
For at your age the heyday and the blood  
Is tame. It's humble and waits upon the  
Judgment; and what judgment would step from this to this?

Act Three, scene 4

**POLONIUS**

Give thy thoughts no tongue,  
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.

Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;

Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,  
Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee.

Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;  
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;  
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,

Neither a borrower nor a lender be;  
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,  
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.

This above all: to thine ownself be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

**HAMLET**

To be, or not to be: that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;

No more; and by a sleep to say we end

The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation

Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;

To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,

Must give us pause: there's the respect

That makes calamity of so long life;



HAMLET

Whose grave's this, sirrah?

GRAVEDIGGER

Mine, sir.

HAMLET

I think it be thine, indeed, for thou liest in't.

GRAVEDIGGER

You lie out on't, sir, and therefore 'tis not yours. For my part, I do not lie in't, yet it is mine.

HAMLET

'Thou dost lie in't, to be in't and say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for the quick. Therefore thou liest.

GRAVEDIGGER

'Tis a quick lie, sir; 'twill away gain, from me to you.

HAMLET

What man dost thou dig it for?

GRAVEDIGGER

For no man, sir.

HAMLET

What woman, then?

GRAVEDIGGER

For none, neither.

HAMLET

Who is to be buried in't?

GRAVEDIGGER

One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead.

HAMLET

How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

GRAVEDIGGER

Of the days i'th' year I came to't that day that our last King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

HAMLET

How long is that since?

GRAVEDIGGER

Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that! It was that very day that young Hamlet was born - he that is mad, and sent into England.

HAMLET

Ay, marry. Why was he sent into England?

GRAVEDIGGER

Why, because a' was mad. A' shall recover his wits there. Or, if a' do not, 'tis no great matter there.

HAMLET

Why?

GRAVEDIGGER

'Twill, not be seen in him there. There the men are as mad as he.

HAMLET

How came he mad?

GRAVEDIGGER

Very strangely, they say.

HAMLET

How strangely?

GRAVEDIGGER

Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

HAMLET

Upon what ground?

GRAVEDIGGER

Why, here in Denmark

## HAMLET Teacher Resource Guide – The Acting Company 50

Facts: William Shakespeare never published any of his own works. However, in Elizabethan England, copyright laws were, more or less, non-existent. The owners of the theaters also owned the plays which that theater produced. Attempts were made to keep the plays out of publication, so there would not be competition from other theaters, however that was easier said than done. Because of this, there are a few different editions of Shakespeare's plays.

The First Folio or "good Folio" edition of Shakespeare's works were first published in 1623 and were the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays. Before this, quarto editions of single plays had been published, but no one had put them all together before. The editors of this edition were two of Shakespeare's friends and fellow actors, John Hemmings and Henry Condell. This edition contains the original spelling (or lack thereof) and punctuation of Shakespeare, both of which are often modernized by editors. Though changed for ease of reading on the left, in the First Folio, "u"s looked like "v"s and vice-versa and "s"s actually looked more like "f"s. You will also notice that the spelling of the same word changes in the folio, this is because there was no set way to spell anything at this point in history.

**HAMLET – First Folio (1623)** To be, or not to be, that is the Question: Whether 'tis Nobler in the minde to suffer The Slings and Arrowes of outrageous Fortune, Or to take Armes against a Sea of troubles, And by opposing end them: to dye, to sleepe No more; and by a sleepe, to say we end The Heart-ake, and the thousand Naturall shockes That Flesh is heyre too? 'Tis a consummation Devoutly to be wish'd. To dye to sleepe, To sleepe, perchance to Dreame; I, there's the rub, For in that sleepe of death, what dreames may come, When we have shuffel'd off this mortall coile, Must give us pawse. There's the respect That makes Calamity of so long life: For who would beare the Whips and Scornes of time, The Oppressors wrong, the poore mans Contumely, The pangs of dispriz'd Love, the Lawes delay, The insolence of Office, and the Spurnes That patient merit of the unworthy takes, When he himselfe might his Quietus make With a bare Bodkin?

Considered by most scholars to be the "bad Quarto", this 1603 edition of Hamlet was most likely the work of the actor portraying Marcellus. We can assume this because the scenes which involve Marcellus match up very well with the First Folio, yet everything else is rather pieced together and most likely not Shakespeare's work. However, this edition of Hamlet is not useless as it is an excellent source of comparison to the First Folio edition and gives modern editors a few different ways to perceive each line of verse.

**HAMLET – Quarto 1 (1603)** To be, or not to be, I there's the point, To Die, to sleepe, is that all? I all: No, to sleepe, to dreame, I mary there it goes, For in that dreame of death, when wee awake, And borne before an everlasting Judge, From whence no passenger ever retur'nd, The undiscovered country, at whose sight The happy smile, and the accursed damn'd. But for this, the joyfull hope of this, Who'd beare the scornes and flattery of the world, Scorned by the right rich, the rich cursed of the poore? The widow being oppressed, the orphan wrong'd, The taste of hunger, or a tyrants raigne, And thousand more calamities besides, To grunt and sweate under this weary life, When that he may his full Quietus make, With a bare bodkin, who would this indure, But for a hope of something after death?

**HAMLET – Modern Edition** To be, or not to be: that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep; No more; and by a sleep to say we end The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep; To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub; For in that sleep of death what dreams may come When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause: there's the respect That makes calamity of so long life; For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, The pangs of despised love, the law's delay, The insolence of office and the spurns That patient merit of the unworthy takes, When he himself might his quietus make With a bare bodkin?

**GHOST**

If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;

Let not the royal bed of Denmark be

A couch for luxury and damned incest.

But, howsoever thou pursues this act,

Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive

Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven

And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge

To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!

The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,

And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:

Adieu, adieu, adieu, remember me.

Act One, scene 5

## Shakespearean Insult Generator

Look your target in the eye and say: “Thou...” and choose one word from each column.

Column 1 (Adjectives)	Column 2 (Adjectives)	Column 3 (Nouns)
artless	base-court	apple-john
bawdy	bat-fowling	baggage
beslubbering	beef-witted	barnacle
bootless	beetle-headed	bladder
churlish	boil-brained	boar-pig
cockered	clapper-clawed	bugbear
clouted	clay-brained	bum-bailey
craven	common-kissing	canker-blossom
currish	crook-pated	clack-dish
dankish	dismal-dreaming	clotpole
dissembling	dizzy-eyed	coxcomb
droning	dog-hearted	codpiece
errant	dread-bolted	death-token
fawning	earth-vexing	dewberry
fobbing	elf-skinned	flap-dragon
froward	fat-kidneyed	flax-wench
frothy	fen-sucked	flirt-gill
gleeking	flap-mouthed	foot-licker
goatish	fly-bitten	fustilarian
gorbellied	folly-fallen	giglet
impertinent	fool-born	gudgeon
infectious	full-gorged	haggard
jarring	guts-gripping	harpy
loggerheaded	half-faced	hedge-pig
lumpish	hasty-witted	horn-beast
mammering	hedge-born	hugger-mugger
mangled	hell-hated	jolt-head
mewling	idle-headed	lewdster
paunchy	ill-breeding	lout
pribbling	ill-nurtured	maggot-pie
puking	knotty-pated	malt-worm
puny	milk-livered	mammet
qualling	motley-minded	measle
rank	onion-eyed	minnow
reeky	plume-plucked	miscreant
ruttish	pox-marked	mumble-news
saucy	reeling-ripe	nut-hook
spleeny	rough-hewn	pigeon-egg
spongy	rude-growing	pignut
surly	rump-fed	puttock
tottering	shard-borne	pumpion
unmuzzled	sheep-biting	ratsbane
vain	spur-galled	scut
venomed	swag-bellied	skains-mate
villainous	tardy-gaited	strumpet
wayward	toad-spotted	vassal
weedy	urchin-snouted	whey-face
yeasty	weather-bitten	wagtail

## Melancholy

How would 16<sup>th</sup> Century Physician Robert Burton classify Hamlet's melancholy? Use these quotations to diagnose Hamlet.

### QUEEN GERTRUDE

I doubt it is no other but the main;  
His father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage.

### KING CLAUDIUS

... 'tis unmanly grief;  
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,  
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,  
An understanding simple and unschool'd

### HAMLET

I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.

### POLONIUS

I precepts gave her,  
That she should lock herself from his resort,  
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.  
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;  
And he, repulsed – a short tale to make –  
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,  
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,  
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,  
Into the madness wherein now he raves,  
And all we mourn for.

### KING CLAUDIUS

There's something in his soul,  
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood...

### HAMLET

The spirit that I have seen  
May be the devil: and the devil hath power  
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps  
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  
As he is very potent with such spirits,  
Abuses me to damn me...

**HAMLET**

Seems, madam! nay it is; I know not 'seems.'  
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,  
Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,  
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,  
Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,  
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,  
That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,  
For they are actions that a man might play:  
But I have that within which passeth show;  
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

**LORD POLONIUS**

...but yet do I believe  
The origin and commencement of his grief  
Sprung from neglected love.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off...

**OPHELIA**

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!  
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;  
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,  
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!

## Why Theatre?

“Seven of the Provincetown Players are in the army or working for it in France and more are going. Not lightheartedly now, when civilization itself is threatened with destruction, we who remain have determined to go on next season with the work of our little theatre. It is often said that theatrical entertainment in general is socially justified in this dark time as a means of **relaxing the strain of reality**, and thus helping to keep us sane. This may be true, but if more were not true - if we felt no deeper value in dramatic art than entertainment, we would hardly have the heart for it now. One faculty, we know, is going to be of vast importance to the half-destroyed world - indispensable for its rebuilding - the faculty of creative imagination. That spark of it, which has given this group of ours such life and meaning as we have, is not so insignificant that we should now let it die. The social justification, which we feel to be valid now for makers and players of plays, is that they shall help **keep alive in the world the light of imagination**. Without it, the wreck of the world that was cannot be cleared away and the new world shaped.”

George Cram Cook,  
founder of New York’s Provincetown Playhouse, 1918

## Theater Etiquette

To make the theater-going experience more enjoyable for everyone, a code of behavior has been established. When attending theatrical performances, remember these simple rules of conduct.

- ❖ Be on time for the performance.
- ❖ Eat and drink only in the theatre lobby.
- ❖ Turn OFF all cellular phones, laptops, tablets.  
NO TEXTING during the show!
- ❖ Talk before and after the performance or during the intermissions only.

*Remember that the people near you and on stage can hear you.*

- ❖ Appropriate responses to the performances, such as laughing and applauding, are appreciated.
- ❖ Act with maturity during romantic, violent and other challenging scenes.
- ❖ Keep your feet off chairs around you.
- ❖ Read your program before or after, not during, the play.
- ❖ Personal hygiene (e.g., combing hair, applying make-up, etc.) should be attended to in the restrooms.
- ❖ Once you are seated and the play has begun, stay in your seat. If you see empty seats ahead of you, ask the usher during the intermission if you can move to them.
- ❖ Always stay until after the curtain call. After the final curtain, relax and take your time leaving.
- ❖ Open your eyes, ears and mind to the entire theatrical experience!