



HAMLET

**Sample Pages from
Hamlet**

Welcome! This is copyrighted material for promotional purposes. It's intended to give you a taste of the script to see whether or not you want to use it in your classroom or perform it. You can't print this document or use this document for production purposes.

Royalty fees apply to all performances **whether or not admission is charged**. Any performance in front of an audience (e.g. an invited dress rehearsal) is considered a performance for royalty purposes.

Visit <http://folk.me/p64> to order a printable copy or for rights/royalty information and pricing.

HAMLET

A PLAY IN ONE ACT ADAPTED BY
Lindsay Price

FROM THE ORIGINAL BY
William Shakespeare



Hamlet

Adaptation and Notes Copyright © 2005 Lindsay Price

CAUTION: This play is fully protected under the copyright laws of Canada and all other countries of the Universal Copyright Convention and is subject to royalty. Changes to the script are expressly forbidden without written consent of the author. Rights to produce, film, or record, in whole or in part, in any medium or in any language, by any group amateur or professional, are fully reserved.

Interested persons are requested to apply for amateur rights to:

Theatrefolk

www.theatrefolk.com/licensing

help@theatrefolk.com

Those interested in professional rights may contact the author c/o the above address.

No part of this script covered by the copyrights hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means - graphic, electronic or mechanical - without the prior written permission of the author. Any request for photocopying, recording, or taping shall be directed in writing to the author at the address above.

Printed in the USA

Characters

Francisco: A Solider

Bernardo: A Solider

Marcellus: A Solider (officer)

Hamlet: Prince of Denmark, nephew to Claudius

Claudius: King of Denmark

Gertrude: Queen of Denmark, Hamlet's mother

Ghost: Hamlet Senior, the ghost of Hamlet's father

Polonius: Chief advisor to the King

Ophelia: Daughter to Polonius

Laertes: Son to Polonius

Horatio: Friend to Hamlet

Rosencrantz: Childhood friend of Hamlet (male)

Guildenstern: Childhood friend of Hamlet (female)

Osric: Member of the court

Players: Five players for the dumb show:

King, Queen, Poisoner,

and two female followers/dancers

Also: A Priest

First Gravedigger (male)

Second Gravedigger (female)

A Messenger (female)

A Gentlewoman

There should also be a number of Lords and Ladies to fill out the court scenes.

The original script has two female characters: Gertrude and Ophelia. In a high school setting, this is not practical. I have given suggestions for parts that can easily be gender switched. Feel free to look for more!

What if Polonius was played by a woman? Or the Priest? The dumb show players are all in mask so they could all could be played by women.

Doubling

You may reduce the number of males needed by doubling the following characters:

Ghost / Priest

Bernardo / Rosencrantz

Francisco / Player King

Osric / Player Poisoner

Marcellus / Gravedigger

Text Note

You will see two styles of verse in *Hamlet*: iambic Pentameter (when the text is set up in lines of verse) and Blank Verse (when the text is set up in paragraph form). My goal is to make the story and characters as accessible and clear as possible. Therefore, for the purposes of this adaptation, I have not remained faithful to the rules of iambic Pentameter. If you are interested in learning the proper meter, I recommend you refer to the original text.

Staging

Hamlet is easily staged. I suggest a bare stage with a curtain at the back, along with a few small hand props and pieces of furniture. Try not to get bogged down with a realistic setting. Instead, focus on the flow of the play. Have characters at the end of one scene exit in one direction as characters in the next scene are entering from the opposite. There's no reason to have a blackout between every scene, particularly in this shortened version.

ACT I - Scene One

The lights come up on a cold, dark night. A clock tower chimes twelve midnight. FRANCISCO, a guard, marches across the stage. BERNARDO, another guard, enters.

BERNARDO: Who's there?

FRANCISCO: Nay, answer me. Stand and **unfold** yourself.

BERNARDO: Long live the King!

FRANCISCO: Bernardo?

BERNARDO: He.

FRANCISCO: You come most carefully **upon your hour**.

BERNARDO: 'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco.

FRANCISCO: For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.

BERNARDO: Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The **rivals** of my watch, bid them make haste.

FRANCISCO: I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who's there?

HORATIO and MARCELLUS enter.

HORATIO: Friends to this ground.

MARCELLUS: And **liegemen** to the **Dane**.

FRANCISCO: Give you good night.

FRANCISCO exits.

BERNARDO: Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.

HORATIO: What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?

BERNARDO: I have seen nothing.

MARCELLUS: Horatio says 'tis but our **fantasy**,
And will not let belief take hold of him.

HORATIO: Tush, tush, **'twill** not appear.

BERNARDO: Sit down awhile;
And let us once again **assail** your ears,
That are so **fortified** against our story
What we have two nights seen.

The GHOST enters.

This opening moment sets the whole tone for the play. It is a dark and bitterly cold night. There should be dim lighting and perhaps smoke (to represent fog) because Bernardo and Francisco can't see each other. Keep that in mind as the characters enter.

unfold: show

upon your hour: on your appointed time, the shift change

Why do you think Francisco is "sick at heart?"

rivals: partners

liegemen: follower, supporter **Dane:** The King of Denmark

Both Bernardo and Marcellus have seen the ghost. Bernardo has to give something in his simple welcome to prompt Horatio to ask about the ghost. How does Horatio say the word "thing" to show that he doesn't believe in the ghost?

What is the relationship between Horatio and Marcellus?

fantasy: imagination

'twill: it will

Marcellus and Bernardo have brought Horatio specifically to see the ghost. Horatio is not a soldier, he is a student.

assail: attack, overwhelm

fortified: strong

How does the ghost enter? He is, by his own admission later on, living in torment. How can you add this to his physical action?

Peace: Quiet

Mark it: Notice it, pay attention to it

harrows: torments

How do the characters react to seeing the ghost? Marcellus and Bernardo have seen it before, but this is Horatio's first time.

usurp'st: usurped – seized or invaded. Usually used in terms of thrones or other high offices.

majesty of buried Denmark: The ghost looks like Hamlet Senior, Hamlet's father, the recently deceased King of Denmark.

Why does the ghost not appear to Hamlet right away? Why does he appear to the soldiers first? Something for the actor playing the ghost to consider.

How now: What's this *Is Bernardo sincere or teasing Horatio for being scared of the ghost?*

What think you on't: What do you think?

avouch: guarantee

In what particular ... I know not: I don't know what to think
in the ... of my opinion: in my opinion

soft: wait, hush

CUT LINES: Horatio mentions that the ghost looked like the king during a battle with Norway or Poland: Like a soldier and a warrior. Hamlet Senior was a soldier at heart – he ruled by action. *Think about how Hamlet Senior differs from Claudius.*

CUT LINES: Horatio and Marcellus discuss how Denmark is headed to war. Fortinbras, the King of Norway's nephew, is headed to Denmark with an army. He wants Denmark to hand back land that was seized by Hamlet Senior.

What is the ghost doing during Horatio's speech? Horatio begs the ghost to speak but it will not.

partisan: combination of spear and axe

How will you convey that the ghost appears everywhere, then disappears?

MARCELLUS: **Peace**, break thee off! Look, where it comes again!

BERNARDO: Looks it not like the King? **Mark it**, Horatio!

HORATIO: Most like. It **harrows** me with fear and wonder.

BERNARDO: It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS: Question it, Horatio.

HORATIO: What art thou that **usurp'st** this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the **majesty of buried Denmark**
Did sometimes march? By heaven I charge thee, speak!

MARCELLUS: It is offended.

BERNARDO: See, it stalks away!

HORATIO: Stay! Speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!

The GHOST exits.

MARCELLUS: 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

BERNARDO: **How now**, Horatio! You tremble and look pale.
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on't?

HORATIO: Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true **avouch**
Of mine own eyes.

MARCELLUS: Is it not like the King?

HORATIO: As thou art to thyself:
In what particular thought to work I know not;
But in the gross and scope of my opinion,
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.
But **soft**, behold! Lo, where it comes again!

The GHOST enters.

I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me.
If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
Speak to me: Stay, and speak! Stop it, Marcellus.

A rooster crows.

MARCELLUS: Shall I strike at it with my **partisan**?

HORATIO: Do, if it will not stand.

BERNARDO: 'Tis here!

HORATIO: 'Tis here!

MARCELLUS: 'Tis gone!

The GHOST exits.

BERNARDO: It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

HORATIO: Break we our watch up, and by my advice
Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.

They exit.

Scene Two

*CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE, HAMLET, POLONIUS,
LAERTES, OPHELIA and other LORDS and LADIES
enter.*

LAERTES steps forward.

CLAUDIUS: And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit; what is't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,
And lose your voice: what wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?

LAERTES: My dread lord,
Your leave and favour to return to France;
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France.

CLAUDIUS: Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

POLONIUS: He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition, and at last
Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent:
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

CLAUDIUS: **Take thy fair hour**, Laertes; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!

*LAERTES bows and steps back to stand with
POLONIUS. HAMLET heaves a huge sigh, causing
CLAUDIUS to turn to him.*

But now, **my cousin** Hamlet, and my son...

HAMLET: *(aside)* **A little more than kin, and less than kind.**

CLAUDIUS: How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET: Not so, my lord; I am **too much i' the sun**.

GERTRUDE: Good Hamlet, **cast thy nighted colour off**,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

CUT LINES: Horatio and Marcellus discuss how spirits are unable to show themselves after dawn.

Claudius, Hamlet Senior's brother, is celebrating his recent marriage to Gertrude, Hamlet's mother. Only two months have passed since the funeral.

This scene is quite different from the foggy cold walls of the castle. It is full of pomp and circumstance. Keep that in mind in the tone of the staging. Put as much contrast between scenes one and two as possible.

CUT LINES: Claudius introduces Gertrude to the court as his wife.

Laertes is a young gentleman, son of Claudius' top advisor, Polonius.

Note how many times Claudius says Laertes' name when talking to him. This first speech introduces Claudius as a showman. He uses very flowery words. How does that translate to the way he moves? Compare him to a modern politician.

It's interesting that Laertes calls Claudius "dread lord." What does Laertes think of Claudius?

CUT LINES: Claudius sends men to Norway to tell Fortinbras the elder to control his nephew. Note the difference between Claudius and Hamlet Senior: Claudius sends men to talk, while Hamlet Senior went with his sword. Claudius is a talker and a politician.

beseech: plead

Take thy fair hour: Enjoy your youth

my cousin: not cousin as we think of it. Kinsman—a close relative, but not immediate. *All this time Hamlet has been sulking in the background. What is he doing?*

A little more than kin, and less than kind: A comment on Claudius' use of the word "cousin." *Hamlet is not happy that Claudius is now his stepfather.*

too much i' the sun: too much time in your presence. Also a pun on "son"

cast thy nighted colour off: stop wearing black clothing.

veiled: downcast

Gertrude says it is common for men to die. She doesn't seem very upset over Hamlet Senior's death. Hamlet repeats the word "common" back to Gertrude, only his meaning reflects his loathing over her recent marriage. A comment that she is not classy, but common. *Does Gertrude catch the sarcasm in Hamlet's voice when he calls her common?*

Hamlet wears black – he's still in mourning for his father. Consider having the rest of the cast dressed in light/bright colours to emphasize Hamlet's isolation.

unprevailing: achieving nothing

Claudius uses the royal "we". He is saying "think of me as a father."

Wittenberg: a German University

retrograde: backwards *Hamlet wants to leave as Laertes did. Gertrude and Claudius want him to remain close. Why?*

Claudius is unemotional about Hamlet Senior's death. How would you react if you were in the same situation and your stepfather said this to you?

Does Hamlet believe Claudius loves him as a son? Who is this speech for – Hamlet or the crowd? What was Hamlet's relationship with Claudius like before all this happened?

Does Gertrude know how hurtful Hamlet finds it to have Claudius call him son? Whether she does or not will greatly affect the way she says her lines.

Everlasting: God

canon: law **self-slaughter:** suicide

two months dead: Hamlet Senior has been dead for two months

Frailty...woman: he is referring to Gertrude

Hamlet is so upset over the marriage (and the fact that it followed so closely after his father's death) that he's thinking about killing himself. The only thing that's holding him back is that it's against God's law. *Is Hamlet more upset over his father's death, or his mother's marriage?*

How do Hamlet and Horatio greet each other? How does Hamlet react to seeing Horatio? He certainly isn't expecting him. Note that when Horatio came to Elsinore he went to Marcellus first. He has not seen Hamlet since Hamlet left school. Is Hamlet glad to see Horatio?

or I do forget myself: not that he forgets who Horatio is, but that he can't believe he's seeing his friend.

Do not for ever with thy **veiled** lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET: Ay, madam, it is common.

CLAUDIUS: 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father.
But, you must know, your father lost a father;
That father lost, lost his. We pray you, throw to earth
This **unprevailing** woe, and think of us
As of a father. For your intent
In going back to school in **Wittenberg**,
It is most **retrograde** to our desire:
And we beseech you, bend you to remain
Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

GERTRUDE: Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet.
I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

GERTRUDE holds out a hand to HAMLET. He stares at her a moment and moves away.

HAMLET: I shall in all my best, obey you, madam.

CLAUDIUS: (*overly cheerful*) Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply:
Be as ourself in Denmark. Come away.

Music plays. Everyone exits but HAMLET.

HAMLET: O, that this too too solid flesh would melt
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew.
Or that the **Everlasting** had not fix'd
His **canon** 'gainst **self-slaughter**. O God! God!
But **two months dead:** nay, not so much, not two:
Let me not think on't. **Frailty, thy name is woman!**
O, God! A beast, that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourn'd longer. Married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules. Within a month!
It is not nor it cannot come to good.

Footsteps approach. He looks offstage.

But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue.

HORATIO, MARCELLUS, and BERNARDO enter and bow.

HORATIO: Hail to your lordship!

HAMLET: I am glad to see you well:
Horatio - **or I do forget myself.**

HORATIO: *(with a bow)* The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

HAMLET: Sir, my good friend; **I'll change that name with you:**
And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio? Marcellus?

MARCELLUS: *(with a bow)* My good lord –

HAMLET: I am very glad to see you. *(to BERNARDO)* **Good even,** sir.
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

HORATIO: *(with a smile)* A truant disposition, good my lord.

HAMLET: I would not hear your enemy say so,
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence,
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself: I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore?
We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.

HORATIO: My lord, **I came to see your father's funeral.**

HAMLET: *(moody again)* I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow student.
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

HORATIO: Indeed, my lord, it follow'd **hard upon.**

HAMLET: Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral baked meats
Did **coldly furnish forth** the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio.
(he sighs) My father – methinks I see my father.

HORATIO: Where, my lord?

HAMLET: In my mind's eye, Horatio.

HORATIO: He was a goodly king.

HAMLET: He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.

HORATIO: **My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.**

HAMLET: Saw? Who?

HORATIO: My lord, the King your father.

HAMLET: The King my father!

HORATIO: Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Been thus encounter'd. A figure like your father,
Appears before them, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them.
And I with them the third night kept the watch;
Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,
The **apparition** comes: I knew your father;

He holds up his hands.

I'll change that name with you: the name of 'servant'

Good even: Good evening

CHARACTER NOTE: What does Hamlet's speech about Horatio being no truant say about Horatio's character?

CHARACTER NOTE: Hamlet acknowledges his soldiers, as well as his friend. He doesn't ignore those beneath him.

I came to see your father's funeral: *If this is true, that means Horatio's been in Denmark for two months and hasn't seen Hamlet at all. Because of what comes next, it feels more of an entry into talking about the ghost than a literal truth.*

hard upon: quickly

coldly furnish forth: The meats served at the funeral were served cold at the wedding. Pretty gruesome!

How do Marcellus, Bernardo and Horatio react when Hamlet says "Methinks I see my father?" They have recently seen the ghost. They have to assume, before Hamlet states his true meaning, that perhaps he has seen the ghost as well.

There is the potential for a comic moment here as the characters could think the ghost is in the room.

My lord, I think I saw him yesternight: *How does Horatio say this line? Slowly and reluctantly? Fast and rushed? He must know it sounds crazy to say he saw the king.*

How does Hamlet react to Horatio? Does he laugh?

apparition: ghost

upon the platform: the walls of the castle

CHARACTER NOTE: Hamlet seems almost thoughtful as he questions and tries to get the facts. What this moment shows is that even though he may have acted like a brat with his mother he's very much a gentleman here. He clearly acts like a prince. It's a different side to his character.

The dialogue here is very snappy and swiftly-paced. Don't let the moment drag.

countenance: facial expression

Perchance 'twill: Maybe it will

warrant: guarantee

If it assume my noble father's person: If it looks like my father. *Hamlet still doesn't quite believe the ghost is his father.*

Hamlet changes "duty" here to "loves." What does this tell you about his relationships with those under him?

Laertes is returning to France.

My necessaries are embark'd: My things are together – My luggage is aboard the ship.

convoy: transportation is available

fashion and a toy in blood: impulsive nature of those who are young and in love

suppliance: pastime, something that just fills time. Laertes is saying that Hamlet's interest in her is fleeting.

Does Ophelia agree with her brother?

These hands are not more like.

HAMLET: But where was this?

MARCELLUS: My lord, **upon the platform** where we watch.

HAMLET: 'Tis very strange.

HORATIO: As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true.

HAMLET: Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me. Hold you the watch to-night?

MARCELLUS & BERNARDO: We do, my lord.

HAMLET: What, look'd he frowningly?

HORATIO: A **countenance** more in sorrow than in anger.

HAMLET: Pale or red?

HORATIO: Nay, very pale.

HAMLET: I would I had been there.

HORATIO: It would have much amazed you.

HAMLET: I will watch to-night; **Perchance 'twill** walk again.

HORATIO: I **warrant** it will.

HAMLET: **If it assume my noble father's person**, I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape And bid me hold my peace. So, fare you well.

MARCELLUS, BERNARDO & HORATIO: Our duty to your honour.

HAMLET: Your loves, as mine to you: farewell.

HAMLET exits in one direction, the others exit opposite.

Scene Three

LAERTES and OPHELIA enter.

LAERTES: **My necessaries are embark'd:** farewell. And, sister, as the winds give benefit And **convoy** is assistant, do not sleep, But let me hear from you.

OPHELIA: Do you doubt that?

LAERTES: For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour, Hold it a **fashion and a toy in blood**. Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting, The perfume and **suppliance** of a minute; No more.

OPHELIA: No more but so?

LAERTES: Think it no more; Perhaps he loves you now, but you must fear,

His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own.

For he himself is subject to his birth:

He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself; for on his choice depends
The safety and health of this whole state.

OPHELIA: I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
As watchman to my heart.

LAERTES: I stay too long: but here my father comes.

POLONIUS enters.

POLONIUS: Yet here, Laertes! Aboard, aboard, for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stay'd for.

Placing a hand on LAERTES' forehead.

There; my blessing with thee!
And these few **precepts** in thy memory
See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any **unproportioned** thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
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 own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!

LAERTES: Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

POLONIUS: The time invites you. Go, your servants **tend**.

LAERTES: Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well
What I have said to you.

OPHELIA: 'Tis in my memory lock'd,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

LAERTES: Farewell.

*OPHELIA and LAERTES hug. POLONIUS claps
LAERTES on the shoulder and LAERTES exits.*

POLONIUS: What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

OPHELIA: So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

POLONIUS: **Marry, well bethought.**
'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you; and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous.
What is between you? Give me up the truth.

For he himself is subject to his birth: He's a prince and, as a prince, he doesn't have much choice in who he loves or marries.

How would you describe Laertes' personality? Is he overbearing? Just looking out for his little sister? What is the relationship between Laertes and Ophelia?

How does Polonius enter? Is he an old fool, or is he a shrewd man who only plays the fool?

precepts: commands, parental advice

unproportioned: unfitting

oft: often

husbandry: thrift, savings

What are Laertes and Ophelia doing during Polonius' speech? Certainly Laertes has heard the speech before, but clearly the two have a close relationship based on Laertes' reaction later in the play.

tend: wait

This is an interesting interchange. Nosy Polonius wants to know exactly what Laertes and Ophelia were talking about, and Ophelia is somewhat vague.

Develop the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia. What has happened between them? This will become important in later scenes.

Marry, well bethought: Indeed it's a good idea he spoke to you on that

'Tis told me: It has been told to me

Note that Ophelia has not told Polonius about her and Hamlet. He "found out." He's been spying on her. He knows they have been together in private and that she has been "free and bounteous." What do you think that means?

tenders: offers

Ophelia says Hamlet has made offers of affection to her. *Keep this in mind during later Hamlet and Ophelia scenes.*

green girl: naive

Unsifted: Inexperienced **perilous:** dangerous

Why is dating Hamlet dangerous?

ta'en these tenders for true pay: Polonius turns Ophelia's tenders (offers of affection) into offers of money

sterling: money

importuned: pressed

go to, go to: go on, an expression of impatience

This is for all: once and for all

slander: disgrace

come your ways: come with me

Polonius tells Ophelia not to see or talk to Hamlet. *Make sure Ophelia's feelings come out in the way she says her last line.*

Does Polonius love his children? Where is mom? Polonius is quite a suspicious character whether you play him as a fool or a shrewd politician.

CHARACTER NOTE: *It is often stated that Ophelia is innocent and stupid. That's fine but doesn't lend much for playing an interesting character. Find some layers. For example, does she say "I do not know, my lord, what I should think" because she truly doesn't know? Because she's lying a little bit? Because she knows her father will tell her what to think? Also recall what Laertes has just told her. She could be just processing that new information.*

lacks of twelve: just before twelve

CUT LINES: In celebration of the wedding, Claudius shoots off a canon every time they finish a cask of wine. A canon is heard at the beginning of the scene and Hamlet comments on this practice.

Raise the tension here immediately. The characters should all be tense as they look for the ghost in every corner.

health: good

Until the ghost appears Hamlet has not believed in it. How does he react instinctively? Does he back away? Move forward?

They are trying to determine if the ghost means well or intends to harm them.

impartment: news, communication

OPHELIA: He hath, my lord, of late made many **tenders** Of his affection to me.

POLONIUS: Affection? Pooh! You speak like a **green girl**, **Unsifted** in such **perilous** circumstance. Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

OPHELIA: I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

POLONIUS: Marry, I'll teach you. Think yourself a baby That you have **ta'en these tenders for true pay**, Which are not **sterling**. Tender yourself more dearly.

OPHELIA: My lord, he hath **importuned** me with love In honourable fashion.

POLONIUS: Ay, fashion you may call it; **go to, go to**. **This is for all:** I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth, Have you so **slander** any moment leisure, As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet. Look to't, I charge you: **come your ways**.

OPHELIA: I shall obey, my lord.

OPHELIA and POLONIUS exit.

Scene Four

A cold, dark night. The clock tower chimes twelve.

HAMLET, HORATIO, and MARCELLUS enter.

HAMLET: The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

HORATIO: It is a nipping and an eager air.

HAMLET: What hour now?

HORATIO: I think it **lacks of twelve**.

HAMLET: No, it is struck.

HORATIO: Look, my lord, it comes!

The GHOST enters.

HAMLET: Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Be thou a spirit of **health** or goblin damn'd, Be thy intents wicked or charitable, Thou comest in such a questionable shape That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet, King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!

The GHOST beckons to HAMLET.

HORATIO: It beckons you to go away with it, As if it some **impartment** did desire To you alone.

MARCELLUS: But do not go with it.

HORATIO: No, by no means.

HAMLET: It will not speak; then I will follow it.

HORATIO: Do not, my lord.

HAMLET: Why, what should be the fear?
I do not set my life in **a pin's fee**;
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself?
It waves me forth again: I'll follow it.

The GHOST beckons to HAMLET. HORATIO and MARCELLUS grab hold of HAMLET.

HORATIO: What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That **beetles o'er** his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form,
Which might **deprive your sovereignty of reason**
And draw you into madness? Think of it!

The GHOST beckons to HAMLET. HAMLET struggles harder against HORATIO and MARCELLUS.

HAMLET: It waves me still.
Go on; I'll follow thee.

MARCELLUS: You shall not go, my lord.

HAMLET: Hold off your hands.

HORATIO: Be ruled; you shall not go.

HAMLET: My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the **Nemean lion's nerve**.
Still am I call'd. Unhand me, gentlemen.
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that **lets me!**

HORATIO and MARCELLUS reluctantly let go.

I say, away! (*to the GHOST*) Go on; I'll follow thee.

HAMLET and the GHOST exit.

HORATIO: He waxes desperate with imagination.

MARCELLUS: Let's follow; 'tis not fit thus to obey him.

HORATIO: **Have after.** To what issue will this come?

MARCELLUS: Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

HORATIO: **Heaven will direct it.**

MARCELLUS: Nay, let's follow him.

Hamlet wants to hear what the ghost has to say. The others do not want him to follow in case the ghost is a demon. *Lots of opportunity for physical action here.*

a pin's fee: the worth of a pin

beetles o'er: juts over, hangs over

deprive your sovereignty of reason: make you mad

This is the type of friend Horatio is. He knows there's a time and place when he has to forget that Hamlet is royalty. Usually it would be out of place for a commoner to say "be ruled" to a prince.

Nemean lion's nerve: A lion killed by Hercules. *He is not afraid of the ghost.*

lets: stops

This moment is an indication of how manic Hamlet is. Show that in his physical action.

Is Hamlet so desperate because he is still grieving? Because he's thought about killing himself and doesn't care what happens to him?

Have after: I'll follow you

Heaven will direct it: Heaven will solve this problem

How long has it been since Hamlet has seen his father? He was away at school when Hamlet Senior died. What was their relationship like? Does Hamlet seem like the type of son Hamlet Senior would have wanted?

Mark me: Listen to me, pay attention to me

Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night: Hamlet Senior was killed before he was able to do a proper confession, so he must stay in purgatory until his sins are purged.

thou didst: you did

This is the first time murder has ever been brought up in reference to Hamlet Senior's death. Hamlet's reaction should reflect this.

know't: know it

Notice how instinctually Hamlet chooses revenge. So why does it take him so long to follow through? Put yourself in the same position. What if you were asked to kill your uncle? Would you be able to act quickly or would you act as Hamlet does?

A serpent stung me: The story of Hamlet Senior's death is that he was stung by a snake.

forged process: false report

prophetic: predicting *Hamlet had a sense that Claudius was involved with his father's death. How does that affect his previous scenes with Claudius?*

Note how many times in the play that Claudius and Gertrude's marriage is referred to as incestuous. Hamlet Senior is saying that Gertrude was seduced by Claudius. Is that how you see their relationship? Is the ghost telling the truth about their relationship? Can ghosts lie?

Methinks I scent the morning air: The ghost can only appear at night *In the playing of the speech remember that the ghost has a limited amount of time. What is Hamlet doing during this speech?*

cursed hebenon: poisoned plant

MARCELLUS and HORATIO chase after HAMLET.

Scene Five

The GHOST enters. HAMLET follows behind.

HAMLET: Where wilt thou lead me? Speak; I'll go no further.

GHOST: **Mark me.**

HAMLET: Speak; I am bound to hear.

GHOST: So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

HAMLET: What?

GHOST: I am thy father's spirit,
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. List, list, O, list!
If **thou didst** ever thy dear father love —

HAMLET: O God!

GHOST: Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET: Murder!

GHOST: Murder most foul, as in the best it is;
But this most foul, strange and unnatural.

HAMLET: Haste me to **know't**, that I, with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge.

GHOST: Now, Hamlet, hear:
'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,
A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a **forged process** of my death
Rankly abused. But know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

HAMLET: O my **prophetic** soul! My uncle!

GHOST: Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce! Won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen!
But, soft! **Methinks I scent the morning air;**
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 hebenon** 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**.
 O, horrible! O, horrible! Most horrible!
 If thou hast **nature** in thee, bear it not.
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
 A couch for luxury and damned incest.
Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me.

The GHOST exits.

HAMLET: O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
 O most **pernicious** woman!
 O villain, villain, **smiling, damned villain!**
 That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;
 At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark.
 It is 'Adieu, adieu! Remember me.'
 I have **sworn 't**.

MARCELLUS: *(offstage)* My lord.

HORATIO: *(offstage)* My lord.

MARCELLUS: *(offstage)* Lord Hamlet?

HORATIO: *(offstage)* **Heaven secure him!**

HAMLET: *(aside)* So be it!

HORATIO and MARCELLUS run in, out of breath.

MARCELLUS: How is't, my noble lord?

HORATIO: What news, my lord?

HAMLET: O, wonderful!

HORATIO: Good my lord, tell it.

HAMLET: There's **ne'er** a villain dwelling in all Denmark
 But he's an **arrant knave**.

HORATIO: There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
 To tell us this.

HAMLET: It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you.
 For your desire to know what is between us,
O'ermaster't as you may.
 And now good friends. Give me one poor request.

HORATIO: What is't, my lord? We will.

HAMLET: Never make known what you have seen tonight.

HORATIO: My lord, we will not.

HAMLET: Nay, but **swear't**.

HAMLET puts his hand out. HORATIO and

distilment: liquid *Claudius poured poison in Hamlet Senior's ear.*

CUT LINES: The ghost describes the effects of the poison.
dispatch'd: deprived

nature: feeling

Adieu: Good-bye

CUT LINES: The ghost tells Hamlet not to hurt his mother.

pernicious: destructive *He is talking about Gertrude.*

smiling, damned villain: referring to Claudius *Consider how Claudius is all-smiles in Scene 2.*

CUT LINES: For the purpose of this shortened version all of Hamlet's speeches have been cut in some way. It would be very helpful to read the speeches in full.

sworn 't: sworn it

Heaven secure him: Heaven keep him safe

Keep in mind that Hamlet's mind is racing a million miles a second over what he's just heard. Put that into the character.

ne'er: never

arrant knave: completely dishonest man

At this point Hamlet is not going to tell Horatio and Marcellus what the ghost said about Claudius. Why does he make this decision?

O'ermaster't: Overmaster it, get over it

swear't: swear it

What does the ghost's voice sound like? Does it echo all around? How do Horatio and Marcellus react?

Hamlet is setting up his plan of "acting" mad to get to the bottom of what the ghost has said. He is asking the others not to give him away.

Notice how Hamlet has gone from a quick act of revenge to something that will certainly take more time. A thoughtful approach, as opposed to a plan of action.

soe'er I bear myself: however I behave
perchance hereafter: may in the future
antic disposition: absurd, foolish behaviour

arms encumber'd thus: arms folded like this

aught: anything

perturbed: disturbed, thrown into confusion

Two months have passed between Acts One and Two

CUT LINES: Polonius sends his servant Reynaldo to France with money and letters for Laertes. Polonius wants Reynaldo to spy on Laertes and spread rumours about him to see if anyone says they are true. The moment says a lot about Polonius' character – he may love his children, but he doesn't trust them. He has to spy on them and find out things for himself.

so affrighted: so scared

closet: room

doublet all unbraced: jacket undone

his stockings...ankle: his stockings dirty and rolled down to his ankles

purport: purpose

Why would this scare Ophelia? Clearly she has never seen Hamlet like this. It's important for the actors playing Ophelia and Hamlet to set up their back story. This moment suggests that at one time Ophelia and Hamlet knew each other quite well.

MARCELLUS put their own hands on top.

HORATIO: In faith,
My lord, not I.

MARCELLUS: Nor I, my lord, in faith.

HAMLET: Never to speak of this that you have seen —

GHOST: (*offstage*) Swear.

HORATIO: O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

HAMLET: And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. But come;
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd **soe'er I bear myself**,
As I **perchance hereafter** shall think meet
To put an **antic disposition** on,
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With **arms encumber'd thus**, or this headshake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
That you know **aught** of me: this not to do,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you,
Swear.

GHOST: (*offstage*) Swear.

HAMLET: Rest, rest, **perturbed** spirit! So, gentlemen,
With all my love I do commend me to you.
And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!

They all exit.

ACT II - Scene One

*POLONIUS enters from one side of the stage and
OPHELIA runs to him from the other.*

OPHELIA: O, my lord, my lord, I have been **so affrighted!**

POLONIUS: With what, i' the name of God?

OPHELIA: My lord, as I was sewing in my **closet**,
Lord Hamlet, with his **doublet all unbraced**,
No hat upon his head, **his stockings foul'd**,
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ankle,
And with a look so piteous in **purport**
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, he comes before me.

POLONIUS: Mad for thy love?

- OPHELIA: My lord, I do not know,
But truly, I do fear it.
- POLONIUS: What said he?
- OPHELIA: He took me by the wrist and held me hard.
Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
And, with his other hand thus **o'er his brow**,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so.
At last, a little shaking of mine arm
And **thrice** his head thus waving up and down,
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being.
- POLONIUS: Have you given him any hard words of late?
- OPHELIA: No, my good lord, but, as you did command,
I did repel his letters and denied
His access to me.
- POLONIUS: That hath made him mad.
I am sorry that with better heed and judgment
I had not quoted him. Come, go we to the King:
This must be known; which, being kept **close**, might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.
- POLONIUS and OPHELIA exit.*
- Scene Two**
- CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE, ROSENCRANTZ, and*
GUILDENSTERN enter.
- CLAUDIUS: Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!
Moreover that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; I entreat you both,
That, **being of so young days brought up with him**,
That you **vouchsafe** your rest here in our court
Some little time, so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather,
Whether **ought**, to us unknown, afflicts him thus.
- GERTRUDE: Good friends, he hath much talk'd of you,
And sure I am two friends there are not living
To whom he more **adheres**. If it will please you
To show us so much **gentry** and good will
Your visitation shall receive such thanks
As fits a king's remembrance.

This moment shows Hamlet's physicalization of his madness. But if he wants to show his madness to Claudius (and find out if Claudius murdered his father) why do you think he bothers Ophelia?

o'er his brow: across his forehead – a classic stereotypical “ah me” gesture

He falls to such perusal ... draw it: he stares at my face so long he would be able to draw it

thrice: three times

Ophelia has cut off all communication with Hamlet for two months. She has also rejected any letters he may have sent her. How would this make Hamlet feel? How does it make her feel?

close: secret

More grief to hide than hate to utter love: If this is kept a secret, it will cause more damage than the discomfort of letting it be known.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, childhood friends of Hamlet, have been sent for by the King to try and figure out Hamlet's bizarre behaviour. *How does Hamlet's relationship with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern differ from his relationship with Horatio?*

Moreover: Besides

being of so young ... with him: being that you were brought up with him as children

vouchsafe: guarantee

ought: anything

adheres: attaches, is attached

gentry: courtesy

If Rosencrantz and Guildenstern can find out what's the matter with Hamlet they will be rewarded financially.

Both your majesties ... to entreaty: *Because Claudius is the King, he could have commanded their help rather than asked.*

Based on these lines it looks like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Hamlet's best friends. See if this holds up as the play progresses.

in the full bent: to the best of our ability

Many productions have Claudius get the names attached to the wrong person in this moment, which is why Gertrude repeats their names, attaching the right name to the right person.

It's interesting that Ophelia does not enter with Polonius.

beseech: beg

CUT LINES: The ambassadors from Norway return. We learn Fortinbras the younger has been chastised and promises not to attack Denmark. He's going to attack Poland instead. He's asking permission to bring his army through Denmark on his way to Poland.

distemper: madness

It's interesting that Claudius refers to Hamlet here as "your son."

o'erhasty: overly hasty *Who decided to marry so quickly? Gertrude or Claudius?*

liege: King **expostulate:** set out in detail

How much does Gertrude know about what Claudius did? The more or less she knows will guide the way the character is played.

Think of how Claudius and Gertrude react physically when Polonius says "your noble son is mad." Is there any movement? None? Do Claudius and Gertrude react the same? Differently?

More matter, with less art: get on with it *What does Gertrude think of Polonius?*

surmise: see for yourselves

What do Claudius and Gertrude know of Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship?

ROSENCRANTZ: **Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.**

GUILDENSTERN: But we both obey,
And here give up ourselves, **in the full bent**
To lay our service freely at your feet,
To be commanded.

POLONIUS enters and goes directly to CLAUDIUS.

CLAUDIUS: Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.
*GERTRUDE moves down to ROSENCRANTZ and
GUILDENSTERN as POLONIUS speaks quietly with
CLAUDIUS.*

GERTRUDE: Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz:
And I **beseech** you instantly to visit
My too much changed son.

GUILDENSTERN: Heavens make our presence and our practises
Pleasant and helpful to him!

GERTRUDE: Ay, amen!

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN exit.

CLAUDIUS: My dear Gertrude, he tells me he hath found
The head and source of all your son's **distemper**.

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

POLONIUS: My **liege**, and madam, to **expostulate**
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day and time.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad.
Mad call I it; for to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

GERTRUDE: **More matter, with less art.**

POLONIUS: Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
I have a daughter, have while she is mine,
Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this: now gather, and **surmise**.

He holds up a letter and reads.

"To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most

beautified Ophelia,"
That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is
a vile phrase: but you shall hear. Thus:

GERTRUDE: Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS: Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.

He continues reading.

"Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love.
HAMLET."

This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me.
And my young mistress thus **I did bespeak**:
"Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star;
This must not be." And then I **precepts** gave her:
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
And he, repelled - a short tale to make -
Fell into madness **wherein** now he raves,
And all we mourn for.

CLAUDIUS: Do you think 'tis this?

GERTRUDE: It may be, very likely.

CLAUDIUS: How may we try it further?

POLONIUS: You know, sometimes he walks four hours together
Here in the lobby.

GERTRUDE: So he does indeed.

POLONIUS: At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him.
Be you and I behind an **arras** then;
Mark the encounter.

CLAUDIUS: We will try it.

GERTRUDE: But, look, where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

POLONIUS: Away, I do beseech you, both away:
I'll **board** him presently.

*CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE exit as HAMLET enters,
reading. POLONIUS approaches HAMLET.*

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET: Well, **God-a-mercy**.

POLONIUS: Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET: Excellent well. Have you a daughter?

*When did Hamlet write this letter to Ophelia? After reading
this letter, how would you feel if you were Hamlet and had
been shut out of Ophelia's life?*

*The letter clearly states Hamlet's feelings. Keep this in mind
for later scenes.*

Polonius says that Hamlet is mad because Ophelia has rejected
him. *Does Claudius believe this?*

I did bespeak: I spoke to her

precepts: commands

wherein: in which

CUT LINES: Polonius is certain that he's a hundred
percent right about what's wrong with Hamlet. He
talks about how he'd get to the truth out of a
situation even if it was hidden in the centre of the
earth.

Polonius suggests using Ophelia as bait to gauge
Hamlet's behaviour while he and Claudius hide behind a
tapestry. *More spying from Polonius.*

*I would suggest having Hamlet sneak in during this
conversation and overhear the plot. How would that
change his later actions?*

arras: hanging tapestry

board: approach

*Does Gertrude leave willingly or reluctantly? Here
they have a chance to talk to Hamlet, but Polonius
shooes them away. He would prefer spying on Hamlet
to get his true reaction.*

God-a-mercy: God have mercy; thank you

*Does Hamlet seem mad in this moment? It seems that
he knows exactly who told Ophelia to stop talking to
him.*

walk i' the sun: keep her away from the sun, or the son which in this case would be Hamlet

conception ... conceive: A conception is an idea, but Hamlet is also talking about pregnancy. To conceive is to get pregnant.

out of the air: outside

Notice the number of times Polonius says "my lord." How does he say this term? Does he ever let his frustration come through in his tone?

take my leave of you: leave you alone

withal: with all

Why does Hamlet say "except my life" three times? What is he physically doing in this moment?

There is a swift change in tone here. At the beginning (until Hamlet starts to question his friends' motives) the tone is light, fun and raucous. Put that into the physical action between the three. Remember that they were childhood friends.

indifferent: average

fortune: fortune is often personified as a woman
we are not the very button: Our fortunes are not at their peak. Hamlet goes on to ask if they are on the "soles of her shoes" meaning: Are they at the bottom of their fortunes?

hither: here

Hamlet calls Denmark a prison. It is possible that he is just playing mad, but in a sense Denmark has been a prison for Hamlet: He hasn't been allowed to return to school, and he can't leave anyway because he has yet to follow through with his revenge.

confines: prison

POLONIUS: I have, my lord.

HAMLET: Let her not **walk i' the sun: conception is a blessing: but not as your daughter may conceive** - Friend, look to 't.

POLONIUS: Will you walk **out of the air**, my lord?

HAMLET: Into my grave.

POLONIUS: Indeed, that is out o' the air. My honourable lord, I will most humbly **take my leave of you**.

HAMLET: You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part **withal:** except my life, except my life, except my life.

POLONIUS: Fare you well, my lord.

HAMLET: (*aside*) These tedious old fools!

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN enter as POLONIUS exits.

GUILDENSTERN: (*with an extravagant bow*) My honoured lord!

ROSENCRANTZ: (*with an extravagant bow*) My most dear lord!

HAMLET: My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good friends, how do ye both?

ROSENCRANTZ: As the **indifferent** children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN: Happy, in that we are not over-happy;
On **fortune's cap we are not the very button**.

HAMLET: Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ: Neither, my lord.

HAMLET: Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours. What's the news?

ROSENCRANTZ: None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

HAMLET: Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true. Let me question more in particular: what have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of fortune, that she sends you to prison **hither**?

GUILDENSTERN: Prison, my lord!

HAMLET: Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ: Then is the world one.

HAMLET: A goodly one; in which there are many **confines**, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

ROSENCRANTZ: We think not so, my lord.

HAMLET: No such matter: What make you at Elsinore?

ROSENCRANTZ: To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

HAMLET: Were you not sent for?
Come, deal justly with me.

GUILDENSTERN: What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET: Why, any thing, but to the purpose. You were sent for; and **there is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to colour**: I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

ROSENCRANTZ: To what end, my lord?

HAMLET: That you must teach me. But let me **conjure** you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the **consonancy of our youth**, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no?

ROSENCRANTZ: (*Aside to GUILDENSTERN*) What say you?

HAMLET: (*Aside*) Nay, then, **I have an eye of you**. (*aloud*) If you love me, hold not off.

GUILDENSTERN: My lord, we were sent for.

HAMLET: What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel. In apprehension how like a god. And yet, to me, what is this **quintessence** of dust? Man delights not me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ: My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

HAMLET: Why did ye laugh then, when I said 'man delights not me'?

ROSENCRANTZ: To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what **lenten** entertainment the players shall receive from you: we **coted** them on the way; and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

A trumpet fanfare is heard.

GUILDENSTERN: There are the players.

HAMLET: Friends, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come then.

HAMLET reaches out to grip ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN's hands. He grips them tightly and won't let go.

Note how Hamlet keeps asking his friends why they are there and they keep deflecting him. As the scene goes on Hamlet comes to the realisation that his life-long friends are not on his side. How does this make Hamlet feel?

Decide on a past relationship between the three friends. How long have they known one another? The more you know about the relationship, the more Hamlet will be able to emotionally react to what Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are doing.

there is a kind of confession ... colour: you have a guilty look on your face which you're not able to hide

conjure: appeal to

consonancy of our youth: because we are the same age

I have an eye of you: I am watching you

How does Rosencrantz react when Guildenstern spills out the truth? How does Guildenstern say this line? Quickly? Slowly? Remorsefully?

It is in this speech that Hamlet turns away from his friends. What is he doing physically? He seems to go quite mad here and really tries to freak out his "former" friends.

quintessence: the purest essence of

Rosencrantz laughs at the line "man delights not me." What kind of laugh is it? A giggle? A smirk?

Rosencrantz doesn't answer Hamlet. He tries to wrench the conversation in another direction. He's trying to recapture their previous joking tone.

lenten: frugal – refers to "without meat"

coted: passed, overtook

What do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern think of Hamlet? Physicalize their feelings as Hamlet grips their hands.

I know a hawk from a handsaw: a hawk is a bird, but also a type of axe *Hamlet is telling the two, if they are listening, that he can tell one thing from another. He can tell a true friend from a fake friend.*

God buy with you: Good bye.

CUT LINES: The players enter and Hamlet is much more warm and gracious to them than he has been with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The lead player performs sections from plays for Hamlet.

CUT LINES: In this monologue Hamlet chastises himself for his inaction. The player (cut) was able to bring about false passion so quickly. Yet Hamlet has real passion but is moving so slowly on avenging his father's death.

malefactions: evils

Hamlet is going to have the players perform a play portraying Claudius' murder of Hamlet Senior. If Claudius reacts, Hamlet will know he is guilty.

Wherein: In which

CUT LINES: Claudius, Gertrude, and Polonius talk to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about Hamlet's behaviour in the previous scene.

Claudius and Polonius are going to use Ophelia as bait so they can observe Hamlet's behaviour.

bestow: lodge, hide

That show of such ... loneliness: That will give you a reason to be alone.

This is one of Shakespeare's best-known monologues. Hamlet is trying to decide whether or not to kill himself. Hamlet wants an escape from his problems. Have you ever felt that way?

To be, or not to be: To live or not to live, to exist or not to exist

sea of troubles: metaphorically a sea of troubles would be impossible to fight. *Something overwhelming and so much more powerful than a person.*

To sleep: death is a form of sleep

No more: no more worries

You are welcome: but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN: In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET: I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly
I know a hawk from a handsaw.

HAMLET lets go of their hands.

My good friends, I'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ: Good my lord!

HAMLET: Ay, so. **God buy with you.**

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN look at each other as if they know they should stay with HAMLET, but then bow and exit.

Now I am alone. I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaim'd their **malefactions**;
I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks,
I'll tent him to the quick: if he but flinch,
I know my course. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

He exits.

ACT III - Scene One

CLAUDIUS, POLONIUS and OPHELIA enter.

POLONIUS: Ophelia, walk you here.
(to *CLAUDIUS*) Gracious, so please you,
We will **bestow** ourselves. (to *OPHELIA*) Read on this book;
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness. I hear him coming: let's withdraw, my lord.

CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS hide as HAMLET enters. He enters slowly and remains off to the side. He does not see OPHELIA.

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: the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, **puzzles** the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all.

Soft you now!

The fair Ophelia! **Nymph**, in thy **orisons**
Be all my sins remember'd.

OPHELIA: Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day?

HAMLET: I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

OPHELIA: *(holding out a packet of letters)*
My lord, I have **remembrances** of yours
That I have longed long to re-deliver.
I pray you, now receive them.

HAMLET: No, not I.
I never gave you **ought**.

OPHELIA: My honour'd lord, you know right well you did;
And with them words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich. Their perfume lost,
(she holds out the packet again)
Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.

OPHELIA holds out the packet again. HAMLET refuses to take it. She places the packet on the floor.

There, my lord.

HAMLET: Ha, ha! Are you **honest**?

OPHELIA: My lord?

HAMLET: Are you fair?

OPHELIA: What means your lordship?

HAMLET: That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should
admit no discourse to your beauty.

OPHELIA: Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with

consummation: final ending

rub: obstacle, problem

mortal coil: the troubles of life

puzzles: confuses

Hamlet thinks the unknown world of the afterlife is scarier than the peace of "death."

Soft you now: Hamlet now sees Ophelia

Nymph: often used in mythology, a beautiful girl.

This is a poetic word which reflects back on the letter Hamlet wrote to Ophelia.

orisons: prayers

How does Hamlet greet Ophelia? He hasn't seen her privately in at least two months.

How does Ophelia greet Hamlet? She knows who's listening in. Ophelia is very nervous.

remembrances: letters, trinkets *Was it her idea to return the letters or her father's?*

ought: anything *Hamlet denies that he gave her anything. He's playing with her. Think about stressing the 'you' in the line, as in "You're not the Ophelia I know."*

These lines of Ophelia's are important – "words of so sweet breath" show her true feelings, while "their perfume lost" shows her father's influence. This moment shows that Ophelia did truly love Hamlet.

honest: In many versions of the text this is defined as "chaste" but considering that she lies later in the scene (when Hamlet asks her where her father is) it certainly could be taken at face value.

You must decide if Hamlet knows Claudius and Polonius are watching as that will change the way Hamlet behaves. If Hamlet doesn't know, he at least knows that Ophelia is not on his side. Hamlet's harsh attitude toward Ophelia in this scene is a sharp contrast to the letter Polonius read earlier.

admit no discourse: shouldn't talk – *as Ophelia hasn't talked to Hamlet*

Knowing what you now know, consider why Hamlet is so mean to Ophelia here.

bawd: prostitute

Physically Hamlet should go a little crazy in this moment. Even though he's putting on an act he must be extremely upset at the way Ophelia has been forced to behave. When Hamlet says "I loved you not" he is not telling the truth. He is either trying to hurt Ophelia or he's speaking for Claudius and Polonius's benefit, particularly when he says, "I am proud, revengeful..."

Get thee to a nunnery: *It is sometimes thought that Hamlet means brothel when he says nunnery. It takes the moment in a much darker (and perhaps unnecessary) direction. In this speech he's not just yelling at her, but himself. If Ophelia goes to a nunnery she is saved from all men who are "arrant knaves."*

Where's your father?: *Ophelia knows Polonius is hiding nearby. Does Hamlet know? Why does he ask this question? This line could be Hamlet's last plea to Ophelia to tell the truth. Instead, she lies.*

Hamlet and Ophelia have a lot in common – they are both essentially outsiders in Elsinore. Others try to control them, and they both resort to madness to speak the truth. Perhaps Hamlet is upset at Ophelia for the ease with which the others are able to use her.

Think of how Hamlet ends the scene physically. Does he push her? Hold her? Kiss her?

o'erthrown: overthrown – *Ophelia believes Hamlet is mad and their relationship is over. This triggers her own descent.*

expectancy: hope **fair state:** Denmark

glass: mirror

Ophelia has quite a formal view of Hamlet.

Note how Ophelia focuses on the fact that because Hamlet is mad, he can never be king. Is that important to her? Did she have hopes of becoming queen?

blown youth: in full bloom

ecstasy: madness

affections: feelings, emotions

spake: spoke

honesty?

HAMLET: Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a **bawd** than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness: I did love you once.

OPHELIA: Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAMLET: You should not have believed me; I loved you not.

OPHELIA: I was the more deceived.

HAMLET: **Get thee to a nunnery!** Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. **Where's your father?**

OPHELIA: At home, my lord.

HAMLET: Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool no where but in's own house. Farewell.

OPHELIA: O, help him, you sweet heavens!

HAMLET: To a nunnery, go, and quickly too. Farewell.

OPHELIA: O heavenly powers, restore him!

HAMLET: Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad. To a nunnery, go!

HAMLET exits on the run.

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!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;
That unmatch'd form and feature of **blown youth**
Blasted with **ecstasy**. O woe is me
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

OPHELIA sinks to the floor in despair. CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS come forward. They do not comfort her.

CLAUDIUS: Love! His **affections** do not that way tend;
Nor what he **spake**, though it lack'd form a little,

Was not like madness. He shall with speed to England,
Haply the seas and countries different
 With variable objects shall expel
 This something-settled matter in his heart.

POLONIUS: My lord, do as you please;
 But, **if you hold it fit**, after the play
 Let his queen mother all alone **entreat** him
 To show his grief. Let her be **round** with him,
**And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear
 Of all their conference.** If she **find him not**,
 To England send him, or confine him where
 Your wisdom best shall think.

CLAUDIUS: It shall be so:
 Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go.

They leave with OPHELIA.

Scene Two

HAMLET enters from one side of the stage.

HAMLET: (*calling out*) What ho! Horatio!

HORATIO enters from the other side.

HORATIO: Here, sweet lord, at your service.

HAMLET: Horatio **thou art e'en as just a man
 As e'er my conversation coped withal.**

HORATIO: O, my dear lord,

HAMLET: Nay, do not think I flatter;
 Give me that man
 That is not **passion's slave**, and I will wear him
 In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
 As I do thee. **Something too much of this.**
 There is a play to-night before the King;
 One scene of it comes near the circumstance
 Which I have told thee of my father's death.
I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
 Observe mine uncle: if his **occulted** guilt
 Do not itself **unkennel**, it's a damned ghost
 That we have seen, and my imaginations
 Are as foul as **Vulcan's stithy**.

HORATIO: Well my lord.
**If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,
 And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.**

A trumpet fanfare is heard.

HAMLET: They are coming to the play; I must be **idle**:

Haply: by chance

Claudius does not believe Hamlet is mad; he is suspicious and plans to send him to England.

CUT LINES: England has been paying protection money to Denmark so they basically have to do whatever Claudius says, including taking Hamlet.

if you hold it fit: if you agree

entreat: urge

round: blunt, plain

And I'll be placed ... conference: Polonius is going to spy on Hamlet again.

find him not: doesn't find out the truth

CUT LINES: Hamlet gives one of the players a speech to add to the play. He cautions the Player against overacting.

thou art e'en ... withal: you are the perfect example of a just man. *As far as Hamlet is concerned, Horatio is the only one who has stood by him. Hamlet is intent on noting who stands by him and who doesn't. See how he treats Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Ophelia, and even his mother, whom he perceives as being against him.*

passion's slave: *Is Hamlet passion's slave?*

Something too much of this: Let's change the subject, this is getting too much. *When these men talk of love it is the bond of friendship and honour, as that of soldiers.*

Earlier in the play Hamlet did not tell Horatio what the ghost said about his murder. Now he has.

prithee: pray

occulted: hidden

unkennel: unleash

Vulcan's stithy: Vulcan is the Roman God of Fire – A stithy is a blacksmith's forge, and is always black.

If he steal ... the theft: *If Claudius' face shows his guilt and escapes detection, Horatio will pay for it – meaning, Horatio will not take his eyes off Claudius.*

idle: crazy – *he needs to put his act on.*

Hamlet is onstage when each character enters. Think of how each of them look, or avoid looking at Hamlet.

chameleon's dish: chameleons were thought to eat air – also a pun on “heir.” *Hamlet always answers unexpectedly. How does that affect the other characters?*

they stay upon your patience: they are ready when you are.

Come hither: Come here

The tension in this scene is great as Hamlet “plays” insane, Claudius tries to figure out what Hamlet is really up to, and all the characters wear their “proper” public faces.

twice two months: Hamlet Senior has been dead four months. Hamlet is toying with everyone by saying his father just died.

suit of sables: a fur coat.

miching mallecho: sneaking mischief

in't: in it

CUT LINES: The play-within-the-play has a prologue.

The dumb show enacts the story of the murder.

Get you a place.

Music plays as CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and LORDS and LADIES enter.

CLAUDIUS: How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET: Excellent, i' faith; of the **chameleon's dish**: I eat the air.

CLAUDIUS: I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine.

HAMLET: No, nor mine now. Be the players ready?

ROSENCRANTZ: Ay, my lord; **they stay upon your patience**.

GERTRUDE: **Come hither**, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

HAMLET: No, good mother, here's metal more attractive. Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

HAMLET plops down at OPHELIA's feet. OPHELIA is very uncomfortable.

OPHELIA: No, my lord.

HAMLET: I mean, my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA: You are merry, my lord.

HAMLET: Who, I?

OPHELIA: Ay, my lord.

HAMLET: What should a man do but be merry? For, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within these two hours.

OPHELIA: Nay, 'tis **twice two months**, my lord.

HAMLET: So long? Nay then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a **suit of sables**.

Music plays. The Players enter, all in mask. They perform a dance.

OPHELIA: What means this, my lord?

HAMLET: Marry, this is **miching mallecho**; it means mischief.

CLAUDIUS: Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence **in't**?

HAMLET: No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no offence i' the world.

CLAUDIUS: What do you call the play?

HAMLET: The Mouse-trap. This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna: Gonzago is the duke's name, his wife, Baptista. 'Tis a

knave piece of work, but what o' that? **Your majesty and we that have free souls, it touches us not.**

The dumb show plays out. A PLAYER KING AND QUEEN enter and embrace lovingly. The PLAYER KING lies down and goes to sleep. The PLAYER QUEEN leaves. The POISONER enters with two or three followers. HAMLET points out the POISONER.

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King. He poisons him i' the garden **for's** estate. You shall see **anon** how the murderer gets the love of the King's wife.

The POISONER takes the crown off of the KING, kisses it and then pours poison into the KING's ear. The KING reacts to the poison and dies. The QUEEN returns to find the KING dead. The POISONER and his followers enter. They soothe the QUEEN. The body of the KING is taken away by the followers. The POISONER woos the QUEEN who first rejects, then accepts the love of the POISONER.

CLAUDIUS stands. He is pale and trembling.

OPHELIA: The King rises.
 HAMLET: What, frightened with false fire?
 GERTRUDE: How fares my lord?
 POLONIUS: **Give o'er the play.**
 CLAUDIUS: Give me some light. Away!
 POLONIUS: Lights, lights, lights!

CLAUDIUS rushes off followed by everyone except HAMLET and HORATIO. HAMLET cries out and gives a little dance of joy.

HAMLET: O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. **Didst perceive?**
 HORATIO: Very well, my lord.
 HAMLET: Upon the talk of the poisoning?
 HORATIO: I did very well note him.
 HAMLET: Ah, ha! Come, some music! Come, the recorders! Come, some music!

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN enter.

GUILDENSTERN: Good my lord, **vouchsafe** me a word with you.
 HAMLET: Sir, a whole history.
 GUILDENSTERN: The King, sir,

Your majesty ... touches us not: Those who are not guilty are not touched by seeing a murder.

How will you stage the dumb show? Will it be realistic? Exaggerated? Will the Poisoner resemble Claudius?

for's: for his **anon:** shortly

It's clear what Claudius thinks about the dumb show but what about the other characters? Does Polonius know what Claudius has done? That will colour his own reaction to the dumb show.

Give o'er the play: Stop the play

Claudius gives Hamlet the reaction he wants to see. Hamlet is now convinced Claudius murdered his father.

Didst perceive?: Did you see him?

Think about the conversation that has happened elsewhere that leads Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to return. Do they come willingly to talk to Hamlet? Have they been pushed? Threatened? Begged? Show their mood in the way they enter. Everyone (except for Hamlet) is tense.

vouchsafe: grant

Ay, sir: Hamlet is mocking Guildenstern – notice Hamlet says sir again in his next line.

distempered: upset, angry. Also a word to describe one who is drunk, which explains Hamlet's next line.

choler: anger

affliction: distress

amazement and admiration: Bewilderment. Not the same positive connotation as the modern definition.

Impart: Go on

closet: room **ere:** before

Have you ... us?: Do you have anything else to say?

distemper: upset behaviour

bar the door upon your own liberty: more of a liberty of the mind than literally

if you deny your griefs to your friend: if you don't tell me what's going on

Why do you go ... into a toil: Why do you so badly want to know what's the matter with me?

Note that Horatio says nothing in this scene. What does he think of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? Present that in his stance.

I know no touch of it: I don't know how

ventages: the holes in the recorder

Hamlet is very clear – he knows Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are trying to "play" him and he's letting them know that he knows.

'Sblood: God's blood, said in disgust

fret: irritate *Also a musical reference.*

Based on what Hamlet has just said, how does he say the word "friends" to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

HAMLET: **Ay, sir**, what of him?

GUILDENSTERN: Is in his retirement marvellous **distempered**.

HAMLET: With drink, sir?

GUILDENSTERN: No, my lord, rather with **choler**. The Queen, your mother, in most great **affliction** of spirit, hath sent me to you.

ROSENCRANTZ: Your behaviour hath struck her into **amazement and admiration**.

HAMLET: O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration? **Impart**.

ROSENCRANTZ: She desires to speak with you in her **closet ere** you go to bed.

HAMLET: We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. **Have you any further trade with us?**

ROSENCRANTZ: Good my lord, what is your cause of **distemper**? You do surely **bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend**.

HAMLET spies a recorder that has been left behind by the Players.

HAMLET: O, the recorder! (*he picks it up*) **Why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?**

GUILDENSTERN: O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

HAMLET: Will you play upon this pipe?

GUILDENSTERN: My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET: I pray you.

GUILDENSTERN: Believe me, I cannot.

HAMLET: I do beseech you.

GUILDENSTERN: **I know no touch of it**, my lord.

HAMLET: 'Tis as easy as lying. Govern these **ventages** with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth...

GUILDENSTERN: But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony. I have not the skill.

HAMLET: Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass. **'Sblood**, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can **fret** me, yet you cannot play upon me. Leave me friends.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN stare at HAMLET for a moment, then at each other. They bow to HAMLET and exit. HAMLET turns to HORATIO.

Now to my mother.
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites;
How in my words soever she be **shent**,
To give them seals never, my soul, consent!

HAMLET and HORATIO exit.

Scene Three

CLAUDIUS, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN enter.

CLAUDIUS: I like him not, nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;
I your commission will **forthwith dispatch**
And he to England shall along with you.

ROSENCRANTZ & GUILDENSTERN: We will haste us.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN exit. POLONIUS enters.

POLONIUS: My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.
Behind the arras I'll **convey** myself,
To hear the process. I'll warrant **she'll tax him home**.
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

CLAUDIUS: Thanks, dear my lord.

POLONIUS exits. CLAUDIUS is alone.

O, my **offence** is rank. It smells to heaven;
It hath the primal **eldest curse** upon't,
A brother's murder. O wretched state!
O bosom black as death!
O **limed** soul, that, struggling to be free,
Art more engaged! Help, angels! **Make assay!**
Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the newborn babe.
All may be well.

CLAUDIUS kneels and begins to pray silently. HAMLET enters behind him and draws his sword.

HAMLET: Now might I do it, now he is praying,
And now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven.
And so am I revenged. *(he raises his sword but then stops)*
That would be scann'd:

CUT LINES: Polonius enters to tell Hamlet that his mother wants to speak to him.

shent: punished

To give them seals: to turn them into deeds, to make them reality (as in putting the royal seal on a document)

Hamlet will speak harshly to his mother, but he won't really mean it. His words and his "soul" will be at odds. *What does this tell you about how he feels about his mother?*

forthwith dispatch: immediately draw up

convey: hide

she'll tax him home: reprimand him

offence: crime

eldest curse: the curse of Cain, who murdered his brother Abel

limed: caught. Refers to bird lime, which was a sticky residue used to catch birds

Make assay: Help me

The King confesses to killing Hamlet Senior. Does your opinion of Claudius change knowing that he feels guilt? What was the relationship between Claudius and his older brother? Was he jealous? Hamlet Senior was a man of action: he defeated all of Norway. Claudius is a man of words and politics.

Claudius tries to pray for forgiveness. Hamlet comes upon him alone; the perfect opportunity to kill him. He does not act because Claudius is praying. He doesn't want to kill Claudius and perhaps send his soul to heaven.

That would be scann'd: That needs to be thought through

heels may kick at heaven: meaning he would go head-first into hell.

stays: waits

physic: prayer

It is ironic that Hamlet thinks he can't kill Claudius because he is praying, when Claudius confesses that he's not really praying at all. His prayers have failed.

warrant: guarantee

This is the first time in the play that Hamlet and Gertrude have been alone together. Consider their relationship before Hamlet Senior's death. Has Hamlet ever been part of a happy family?

Gertrude says that Hamlet has offended Claudius.
Hamlet says that Gertrude has offended Hamlet Senior.

idle: crazy

Why is Hamlet so rude to his mother? He must think she is aware of the murder. Does he change his mind in this scene?

rood: crucifix

I set you up a glass: I make you look in the mirror

What wilt thou do?: What will you do?

Why does Gertrude fear Hamlet would murder her so easily?

A villain kills my father; and for that
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.

No.

When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed;
Then trip him, that his **heels may kick at heaven**,
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black
As hell, whereto it goes. My mother **stays**.
This **physic** but prolongs thy sickly days.

HAMLET sneaks out. CLAUDIUS sighs, and gets up.

CLAUDIUS: My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

CLAUDIUS exits.

Scene Four

GERTRUDE and POLONIUS enter. They are in the Queen's room.

POLONIUS: He will come straight. Look you lay home to him.

HAMLET: *(offstage)* Mother, mother, mother!

GERTRUDE: I'll **warrant** you,
Fear me not: withdraw, I hear him coming.

POLONIUS hides behind a curtain. HAMLET enters.

HAMLET: Now, mother, what's the matter?

GERTRUDE: Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET: Mother, you have my father much offended.

GERTRUDE: Come, come, you answer with an **idle** tongue.

HAMLET: Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

GERTRUDE: Why, how now, Hamlet!

HAMLET: What's the matter now?

GERTRUDE: Have you forgot me?

HAMLET: No, by the **rood**, not so.
You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife;
And, would it were not so, you are my mother.

GERTRUDE: Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.

HAMLET: *(grabs her)* Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;
You go not till I **set you up a glass**
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

GERTRUDE: **What wilt thou do?** Thou wilt not murder me?

Help, help, ho!

POLONIUS: *(from behind the curtain)* What, ho! Help, help, help!

HAMLET: *(drawing a knife)* How now! A rat? Dead, for a **ducat**, dead!

*HAMLET thrusts the knife through the curtain, hitting
POLONIUS.*

POLONIUS: *(behind the tapestry)* O, I am slain!

POLONIUS falls and dies.

GERTRUDE: O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET: Nay, I know not. Is it the King?

GERTRUDE: O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

HAMLET: A bloody deed! Almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

GERTRUDE: **As kill a king!**

HAMLET: Ay, lady, 'twas my word.

HAMLET draws aside the curtain and sees POLONIUS.

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!

HAMLET turns to GERTRUDE.

Leave wringing of your hands: peace! Sit you down,
And let me wring your heart; for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff.

GERTRUDE: What have I done, that **thou darest** wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?

HAMLET: Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there.

GERTRUDE: Ay me, what act,
That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?

*The GHOST enters. HAMLET breaks away from
GERTRUDE and kneels before the GHOST.*

HAMLET: Save me, and hover **o'er** me with your wings,
You heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?

GERTRUDE: Alas, he's mad!

GHOST: Do not forget. This visitation
Is but to **whet thy almost blunted purpose**.
But, look, **amazement** on thy mother sits:
Speak to her, Hamlet.

ducat: gold coin

Hamlet thinks he has murdered Claudius. *Why does Hamlet act so quickly here when up to this point he's been so slow?*

Does Hamlet believe Gertrude knows about the murder or is he just equating her marriage to Hamlet Senior's murder?

As kill a king: *Does this line suggest that Gertrude didn't know Claudius killed Hamlet Senior?*

'twas: it was

thou darest: you dare

CUT LINES: Hamlet forces Gertrude to see the differences between Hamlet Senior and Claudius.

Gertrude cannot see the ghost. She only sees Hamlet talking to the air. *Why do you think the ghost shows up at this exact moment? Why is it others have been able to see the ghost but not Gertrude?*

o'er: over

whet thy almost blunted purpose: the ghost is telling Hamlet to get on with the revenge

amazement: bewilderment

bend your eye on vacancy: stare into space
incorporal: bodiless **hold discourse:** talk
whereon: on what

habit: clothing
portal: door

What does the ghost do as he leaves? Does he gesture lovingly toward Gertrude? Does he point at Hamlet? Give the ghost a final action.

coinage: invention
ecstasy: madness

temperately: moderately

gambol: shy away

unction: oil, balm – Hamlet tells Gertrude not to use “madness” as a covering for this problem. It only covers the problem and does not cure what lies beneath. *Is this a sane or insane comment?*

CUT LINES: Hamlet tells Gertrude if she has any morals left to stay away from Claudius – but also, he wants her to get close enough so she can tell him that Hamlet isn’t really mad, but only playing mad.

bestow: lodge him, get rid of him

Has Gertrude really forgotten that Hamlet is being sent to England?

schoolfellows: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

They bear the mandate: There is a plan against me. He knows there’s an ulterior motive to his being sent to England.

draw toward an end with you: finish what I started

HAMLET: How is it with you, lady?

GERTRUDE: Alas, how is't with you,
That you do **bend your eye on vacancy**
And with the **incorporal** air do **hold discourse**?
O gentle son, **whereon** do you look?

HAMLET: On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!
Do you see nothing there?

GERTRUDE: Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

HAMLET: Nor did you nothing hear?

GERTRUDE: No, nothing but ourselves.

HAMLET: Why, look you there! Look, how it steals away!
My father, in his **habit** as he lived!
Look, where he goes, even now, out at the **portal**!

The GHOST exits.

GERTRUDE: This the very **coinage** of your brain:
This bodiless creation **ecstasy**
Is very cunning in.

HAMLET: Ecstasy!
My pulse, as yours, doth **temperately** keep time,
And makes as healthful music. It is not madness
That I have utter'd. Bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word, which madness
Would **gambol** from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that mattering **unction** to your soul,
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks.
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within, infects unseen.

GERTRUDE: O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAMLET: Goodnight. (*pointing at POLONIUS*)
For this same lord, I will **bestow** him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So, again, good night. I must to England;
You know that?

GERTRUDE: Alack,
I had forgot: 'tis so concluded on.

HAMLET: There's letters seal'd and my two **schoolfellows**,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,
They bear the mandate. Let it work.
(*to POLONIUS*) Come, sir, to **draw toward an end with you.**
Good night, mother.

HAMLET exits dragging POLONIUS. GERTRUDE watches then runs off in the opposite direction.

ACT IV Scene Two

ROSENCRANTZ: (*offstage*) Hamlet!

GUILDENSTERN: (*offstage*) Lord Hamlet!

HAMLET enters.

ROSENCRANTZ: (*offstage*) Lord Hamlet!

GUILDENSTERN: (*offstage*) Lord Hamlet!

HAMLET: What noise? Who calls on Hamlet?
O, here they come.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN enter.

ROSENCRANTZ: What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

HAMLET: **Compounded** it with dust, **whereto 'tis kin**.

ROSENCRANTZ: Tell us **where 'tis**, that we may take it **thence**
And bear it to the chapel.

HAMLET: The body is with the King, but the King is not with
the body. The King is a thing....

CLAUDIUS enters.

GUILDENSTERN: A thing, my lord!

HAMLET: Of nothing.

CLAUDIUS: Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET: At supper.

CLAUDIUS: At supper. Where?

HAMLET: Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain
convocation of **politic** worms are **e'en** at him. Your worm is
your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us,
and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean
beggar is but **variable service**, two dishes, but to one table:
that's the end.

CLAUDIUS: Where is Polonius?

HAMLET: In heaven; send hither to see. If your messenger find him not
there, seek him i' **the other place** yourself. But indeed, if you
find him not within this month, **you shall nose him** as you go
up the stairs into the lobby.

*CLAUDIUS turns to ROSENCRANTZ and
GUILDENSTERN.*

CLAUDIUS: Go seek him there.

HAMLET: He will stay till ye come.

CUT LINES: Some scenes in this act have been cut in their entirety. I have kept the original scene numbers for your reference. Scene One recaps the previous scene between Hamlet and Gertrude. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter and Claudius tells them to go after Hamlet and find out what he's done with Polonius.

CUT LINES: At the beginning of Scene Two, Hamlet has just hidden Polonius' body. At the end of scene two, Hamlet runs off.

Scenes Two and Three are combined.

CUT LINES: At the beginning of Scene Three, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern tell Claudius they cannot get the information he requested from Hamlet, so they brought him to the King.

Compounded: mixed

whereto 'tis kin: to which it is family

where 'tis: where it is **thence:** from there

CHARACTER NOTE: It's interesting that Rosencrantz doesn't ask, "Where is Polonius?" Instead he asks, "Where is the dead body?"

To call a King nothing is definitely an insult. He is alluding Claudius is a bad king and perhaps that he is coming after him finally.

Note the punctuation in Claudius' lines.

What is Claudius' emotional state here? Is he slow and measured in his anger? How hard is it not to lash out at Hamlet? Is he cautious because of what Hamlet may do to him?

convocation: assembly **politic:** crafty, cunning
e'en: now

variable service: different courses of a meal

Hamlet is saying that there's no difference between a king and a beggar – all die and all are eaten by worms.

the other place: hell

you shall nose him: you will smell him (as the body decomposes)

Notice how formally Claudius speaks here. What is Hamlet doing during this speech?

we do tender: we hold dear, tenderly

bark: ship

tend: wait

How does Hamlet say "For England!" Does he convey surprise? Happiness? False happiness? We know that he already knows he's going.

So is it ... purposes: Why does Claudius say this line directly to Hamlet? It sounds like a private aside, because it's rather threatening. But based on Hamlet's next line, it's clear he hears what Claudius said.

Claudius is sending Hamlet to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with letters instructing that Hamlet be put to death.

ought: all

Thou mayst not ... process: you cannot turn down my command

congruing: agreeing

present: immediate

hectic: fever

Howe'er my haps: However my fortunes **ne'er:** never

CUT LINES: Scene Four. Fortinbras arrives at Denmark and further remarks at how they are allowed to march through Denmark on their way to Poland. Hamlet has a sane conversation with a Captain about how useless the invasion is. All it will achieve is death. At the end of the scene he gets on the boat with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

NOTE: The Gentlewoman is originally a Gentleman. *This is the only time this character speaks. I would suggest she is a servant of Gertrude's and some relationship is worked out so this is not the first time the audience sees the character.*

importunate: persistent, urgent **distract:** out of her mind
Ophelia has gone mad. *Both Ophelia and Hamlet use madness (he intentionally, and she unintentionally) to speak the truth. Think about why Gertrude refuses to speak to Ophelia. What does she fear?*

Spurns enviously at straws: Takes offence at small things
things in doubt: she doesn't make sense, speaks gibberish

collection: try to understand, collect meaning

botch: patch

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN bow and exit.

CLAUDIUS: Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,
Which **we do tender**, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done, must send thee hence
With fiery quickness. Therefore prepare thyself;
The **bark** is ready, and the wind at help,
The associates **tend**, and everything is bent
For England.

HAMLET: For England!

CLAUDIUS: Ay, Hamlet.

HAMLET: Good.

CLAUDIUS: **So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.**

HAMLET: I see a cherub that sees them. But, come; for
England! Farewell, dear mother.

CLAUDIUS: Thy loving father, Hamlet.

HAMLET: My mother: father and mother is man and wife, man and wife
is one flesh, and so, my mother. Come, for England!

HAMLET exits.

CLAUDIUS: And, England, if my love thou hold'st at **ought**,
Thou mayst not coldly set
Our sovereign process; which imports at full,
By letters **congruing** to that effect,
The **present** death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
For like the **hectic** in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me: till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were **ne'er** begun.

CLAUDIUS exits.

Scene Five

GERTRUDE, HORATIO and a GENTLEWOMAN enter.

GERTRUDE: I will not speak with her.

GENTLEWOMAN: She is **importunate**, indeed **distract**:
Her mood will needs be pitied.

GERTRUDE: What would she have?

GENTLEWOMAN: She speaks much of her father; says she hears
There's tricks i' the world, and hems, and beats her heart,
Spurns enviously at straws, speaks **things in doubt**,
That carry but half sense. Her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to **collection**. They aim at it,
And **botch** the words up fit to their own thoughts.

HORATIO: 'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may strew
Dangerous **conjectures** in ill-breeding minds.

GERTRUDE: Let her come in.

*OPHELIA runs in as if she has escaped from whomever
was holding her back. HORATIO exits quietly.*

OPHELIA: Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

GERTRUDE: **How now**, Ophelia.

OPHELIA: (*sings*) How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his **cockle hat** and staff,
And his sandal **shoon**.

GERTRUDE: Alas, sweet lady, what **imports** this song?

OPHELIA: **Say you?** Nay, pray you, **mark**.
(*sings*) He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone.
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

GERTRUDE: Nay, but Ophelia —

OPHELIA: Pray you mark.
(*sings*) White his shroud as the mountain snow
Larded with sweet flowers
Which bewept to the grave did not go
With true-love showers.

HORATIO re-enters with CLAUDIUS during the song.

CLAUDIUS: How do you, pretty lady?

OPHELIA: Well, God save you! They say the **owl was a baker's
daughter**. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what
we may be. God be at your table!

CLAUDIUS: How long hath she been thus?

OPHELIA: I hope all will be well. We must be patient. But I cannot choose
but weep, to think **they should lay him i' the cold ground**.
My brother shall know of it, and so I thank you for your good
counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies, good night,
sweet ladies; good night, good night.

OPHELIA exits.

CLAUDIUS: Follow her close. Give her good watch,
I pray you.

HORATIO and the GENTLEWOMAN exit.

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,

conjectures: opinions based on incomplete information

Horatio says those who are listening to Ophelia might get the wrong impression of what's been happening from her words. *Note that it's not caring about Ophelia's well-being that pushes Gertrude to see her.*

How now: How are you?

cockle hat: hat with a shell on it – hat of a pilgrim

shoon: shoes

imports: is the meaning

Say you: Is that what you're asking?

mark: pay attention

What does Ophelia look like now? How will you physically represent her madness? How does her real madness differ from Hamlet's pretend madness?

Larded with: covered with

owl was a baker's daughter: A reference to a folktale of a baker's daughter who was turned into an owl because she was ungenerous.

they should ... cold ground: burial of Polonius

How does Ophelia exit? Does she address those onstage as her "ladies" or does she see imaginary ladies? Does she scream?

Laertes has heard about his father's death and thinks Claudius is to blame. He has gathered a crowd, overpowered the guards and is on his way to confront Claudius.

overpeering of his list: water rising up and over the shore – a rising rebellion that has overpowered the guards.

impetuous: pitiless

riotous head: armed force

O'erbears: Overtakes, puts down

counter: counterproductive

Gertrude says Laertes and his men are on the wrong scent – they don't really know who's to blame.

What this moment shows is that perhaps Claudius is not all that popular with his people.

Note Laertes' quick reaction (as opposed to Hamlet's slow reaction) on hearing of suspicious circumstances surrounding his father's death.

CHARACTER NOTE: *This is an interesting moment for Gertrude. She does not hide behind Claudius, but moves forward and puts her hand on Laertes' arm.*

Why do Claudius and Gertrude choose to speak so calmly? They also choose "not to know" what Laertes is upset about, when they know full well. Claudius' smooth nature contrasts with Laertes' emotional fury.

But not by him: But not by Claudius

juggled with: deceived, lied with

When sorrows come, they come not single spies
But in battalions.

There is a commotion offstage.

GERTRUDE: Alack, what noise is this?

FRANCISCO enters with his sword drawn.

CLAUDIUS: What is the matter?

FRANCISCO: Save yourself, my lord!
The ocean, **overpeering of his list**,
Eats not the flats with more **impetuous** haste
Than young Laertes, in a **riotous head**,
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord!
They cry 'Choose we: Laertes shall be king.'
Caps, hands, and tongues, applaud it to the clouds:
'Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!'

FRANCISCO runs off to join the fight again.

GERTRUDE: How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!
O, this is **counter**, you false Danish dogs!

CLAUDIUS: The doors are broke!

*There is the sound of a crash and loud offstage voices.
LAERTES enters with his sword drawn.*

LAERTES: Where is this king? O thou vile king,
Give me my father!

GERTRUDE: Calmly, good Laertes. *(she lays a hand on his arm)*

LAERTES: That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard.

CLAUDIUS: What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?
Let him go, Gertrude. Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incensed. Let him go, Gertrude.
Speak, man.

LAERTES: Where is my father?

CLAUDIUS: Dead.

GERTRUDE: **But not by him.**

CLAUDIUS: *(to GERTRUDE)* Let him demand his fill.

LAERTES: How came he dead? I'll not be **juggled with**:
To hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged
Most thoroughly for my father.

OPHELIA is heard singing offstage.

How now! What noise is that?

OPHELIA enters carrying flowers.

Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia?

OPHELIA: *(singing)* They bore him barefaced on the bier;
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny;
And in his grave rain'd many a tear:
Fare you well, my dove!

She hands a flower to LAERTES.

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray, love, remember. *(to LAERTES)* And there is pansies, that's for thoughts. *(to CLAUDIUS)* There's fennel for you, and columbines. *(to GERTRUDE)* There's rue for you; and here's some for me. *(she crumbles a flower and drops it)* There's a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died: they say he made a good end.

(sings) For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.
And will he not come again?
And will he not come again?
No, no, he is dead.
Go to thy death-bed.
He never will come again.

OPHELIA howls and runs off.

LAERTES: Do you see this, O God?

CLAUDIUS: Laertes, I must **commune** with your grief,
Or you deny me right. Go but apart,
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me.
If by direct or by **collateral** hand
They find us touch'd, we will **our kingdom** give,
Our crown, our life, and all that we can ours,
To you in satisfaction.
And where the offence is let the great axe fall.
I pray you, go with me.

CLAUDIUS puts an arm around LAERTES and they exit with GERTRUDE following.

Scene Six

HORATIO enters. He is reading a letter.

HORATIO: "...**Ere** we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour, and in the **grapple** I boarded them. On the instant they got clear of our ship so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of

Ophelia's "flower moment" has been performed many different ways. She has given actual flowers out to the other characters. She has given out "imaginary flowers." One production had her handing out bones as if they were flowers. There is an indication in the text as to who the flowers could go to, but don't let that stop you from changing it.

Here are some definitions connected to the different flowers:

rosemary: remembrance, fidelity, also used in weddings – used to be as significant as wearing white

pansies: melancholy

fennel: flattery, also an ancient aphrodisiac

columbine: ingratitude, thanklessness, infidelity

rue: repentance, sorrow

daisy: dissembling – hypocrite, disguising intentions, also unhappy love

violets: faithfulness, modesty, truth in love

What is Laertes doing during Ophelia's moment? Does his anger drain out of him?

commune: share

'**twixt:** between

collateral: connected, beside the main source

our kingdom: Claudius uses the royal "we" here

Claudius tells Laertes to learn all he can about his father's death. If Laertes learns Claudius has had any part of it, he'll give Laertes the kingdom.

Horatio reads a letter from Hamlet. Hamlet's ship was attacked by pirates. He has escaped onto their ship and is on his way back to Denmark.

Ere: before

grapple: struggle

repair thou: get you

What is Horatio's response to the letter? Surprise? Admiration?

your conscience my acquaintance seal: your mind must acknowledge I had nothing to do with Polonius' death

Sith: since

Claudius tells Laertes that not only did Hamlet kill Laertes, he also tried to kill Claudius. *Who do you suppose Laertes talked to to get his information?*

CUT LINES: Claudius tells Laertes he didn't go after Hamlet because of his mother and because the people of Denmark love Hamlet and may have sided with him.

Claudius receives a letter from Hamlet speaking of his return. *Think of Laertes' reaction to this letter. He is going to come face to face with his father's murderer.*

High and mighty: is Hamlet sincere or sarcastic?

naked: not literal – Hamlet is without his possessions

thereunto: to this

abuse: deception

character: handwriting

How does Claudius respond to the letter? Remember, he thinks Hamlet was on his way to England to be killed.

mercy, but they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the King have the letters I have sent; and **repair thou** to me with as much speed as thou wouldst fly death. Farewell. He that thou knowest thine, HAMLET."

HORATIO exits.

Scene Seven

CLAUDIUS and LAERTES enter.

CLAUDIUS: Now must **your conscience my acquaintance seal**,
And you must put me in your heart for friend,
Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,
That he which hath your noble father slain
Pursued my life.

LAERTES: And so have I a noble father lost;
A sister driven into desperate terms,
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger on mount of all the age
For her perfections. But my revenge will come.

A MESSENGER enters.

CLAUDIUS: How now! What news?

MESSENGER: Letters, my lord, from Hamlet.

CLAUDIUS: From Hamlet! Who brought them?

MESSENGER: Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not.

CLAUDIUS: Laertes, you shall hear them. *(to MESSENGER)* Leave us.

The MESSENGER bows and exits. CLAUDIUS opens the letters and reads.

"**High and mighty**, You shall know I am set **naked** on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking your pardon **thereunto**, recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return. HAMLET." What should this mean? Are all the rest come back? Or is it some **abuse**, and no such thing?

LAERTES: Know you the hand?

CLAUDIUS: 'Tis Hamlet's **character**. 'Naked!'
And in a postscript here, he says 'alone.'
Can you advise me?

LAERTES: I'm lost in it, my lord. But let him come;
It warms the very sickness in my heart,
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
Thus didest thou.

CLAUDIUS: Will you be ruled by me?

LAERTES: Ay, my lord,
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

CLAUDIUS: To thine own peace. I will work him
 To an **exploit**, now ripe in my **device**,
 Under the which he shall not choose but fall.
 For your **rapier** most especial...
 Laertes, was your father dear to you?
 Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
 A face without a heart?

LAERTES: Why ask you this?

CLAUDIUS: Not that I think you did not love your father...
 Hamlet comes back: what would you undertake,
 To show yourself your father's son in deed
 More than in words?

LAERTES: (*drawing his sword*) To cut his throat i' the church.

CLAUDIUS: Revenge should have no bounds.

LAERTES: And, for that purpose, I'll anoint my sword.
 I bought an **unction** of a **mountebank**,
 So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,
 Where it draws blood no **cataplasm** so rare,
 Can save the thing from death that is but scratch'd.
 I'll touch my point
 With this **contagion**, that, if I **gall** him slightly,
 It may be death.

GERTRUDE enters, weeping.

CLAUDIUS: How now, sweet queen!

GERTRUDE: One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
 So fast they follow; your sister's drown'd, Laertes.

LAERTES: Drown'd! O, where?

GERTRUDE: There is a willow grows **aslant** a brook
 That shows his **hoar** leaves in the glassy stream.
 There with fantastic garlands did she come
 There, on the **pendent** boughs her **coronet weeds**
 Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke
 When down her weedy trophies and herself
 Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide
 And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:
 Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
 Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
 To muddy death.

LAERTES: Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
 And therefore I forbid my tears. But yet

So you will not o'errule me to a peace: So long as you don't stop me from killing him

exploit: a brilliant act **device:** plan

rapier: sword

CUT LINES: Claudius wants to set up a duel between Laertes and Hamlet. Hamlet is supposedly jealous of Laertes' fencing skills and won't turn down the duel. It is supposed to be a game, but for Laertes, it will be a fight to the death.

Laertes will put poison on his sword so that even a scratch will kill Hamlet.

unction: oil **mountebank:** quack doctor

cataplasm: medicinal dressing

contagion: disease spread by touch **gall:** scratch

Ophelia has drowned in the stream. *It's not spoken of here, but in the next scene we will learn that Ophelia killed herself.*

Did Gertrude see this happen to Ophelia or was it only reported to her? Did she watch?

aslant: beside

hoar: grey, old

pendent: hanging **coronet weeds:** crown of weeds

Laertes is a soldier. It would be embarrassing for him to cry, yet he does. Show that contradiction physically.

trick: manner, meaning you cry when you're sad
when these are gone: these tears
The woman will be out: tears are considered to be womanly
fain: happily

In the original text the gravediggers are called Clowns.
Why do you think that is?

wilfully seeks her own salvation: killed herself
Suicides were not given "Christian burials" on church grounds.

straight: immediately
crowner: coroner

wittingly: intentionally, deliberately

argal: therefore

The Gravediggers do not speak in verse. That is an indication of their lower-class status.

Ay, marry, is't: indeed it is
quest: inquest – an inquiry into a matter, especially into the cause of a death

Will you ha' the truth on't: Will you have the truth on it?

out o' Christian burial: not on church grounds

Ophelia is only being treated this way because of her family and status.

there thou say'st: you're right

countenance: approval

It is our **trick**; nature her custom holds,
 Let shame say what it will: (*crying*) **when these are gone,**
The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord:
 I have a speech of fire, that **fain** would blaze,
 But that this folly drowns it.

LAERTES exits.

CLAUDIUS: Let's follow, Gertrude.
 How much I had to do to calm his rage!
 Now fear I this will give it start again;
 Therefore let's follow.

CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE follow after LAERTES.

ACT V - Scene One

Two GRAVEDIGGERS enter with shovels. They are in a graveyard.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER: Is she to be buried in Christian burial when she **wilfully seeks her own salvation?**

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: I tell thee she is: therefore make her grave **straight**.
 The **crowner** hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER: How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: Why, 'tis found so.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER: For here lies the point: if I drown myself **wittingly**, it argues an act, and an act hath three branches - it is, to act, to do, to perform, **argal**, she drowned herself wittingly.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: Nay, but hear you good digger.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER: Give me leave. Here lies the water; good. Here stands the man; good. If the man go to this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes, mark you that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself. Argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: But is this law?

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER: **Ay, marry, is't;** crowner's **quest** law.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: **Will you ha' the truth on't?** If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried **out o' Christian burial**.

HAMLET and HORATIO enter and watch the GRAVEDIGGERS.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: Why, **there thou say'st**.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER: And the more pity that great folk should have **countenance** in this world to drown or hang themselves, more

than their **even Christian**.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentleman but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers.

They dig.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: (*sings*) In youth, when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet,
To **contract**, O, the time, for, ah, my **behave**,
O, methought, there was nothing **meet**.

HAMLET: Has this fellow no feeling of his business he sings at grave-making?

HORATIO: **Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.**

HAMLET: 'Tis e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER: (*sings*) But age, with his stealing steps,
Hath claw'd me in his clutch,
And hath shipped me intil the land,
As if I had never been such.

FIRST & SECOND GRAVEDIGGER: (*sings*) A pick-axe, and a spade, a spade,
For and a **shrouding sheet**:
O, a **pit of clay** for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

HAMLET and HORATIO approach.

HAMLET: Whose grave's this, **sirrah**?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: Mine, sir.

HAMLET: I think it be thine, indeed; for **thou liest in't**.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: You lie out on't, sir, and therefore it is not yours. For my part, I do not lie in't, and 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.

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

HAMLET: What man dost thou dig it for?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: For no man, sir.

HAMLET: What woman, then?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: For none, neither.

HAMLET: Who is to be buried in't?

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

HAMLET: We must speak **by the card**, or **equivocation** will undo us.

even Christian: fellow Christians

In some productions the gravediggers are in a hole as they dig Ophelia's grave. How can you stage this without a hole? Will the diggers mime digging?

contract: shorten **behave**: benefit, advantage

meet: proper, suitable

CUT LINES: Hamlet and Horatio discuss the different graves and who the corpses could be. In the original, the gravediggers toss out skulls from the hole.

Custom hath ... easiness: he does it so often, it does not make him sad

'Tis e'en ... **sense**: I agree. Those who don't do hard work have less-hardened senses. *He's thinking of himself.*

shrouding sheet: burial cloth

a pit of clay: a grave

sirrah: common form of address to someone of the lower classes. Opposite of "sir"

thou liest in't: you lie in it

quick: alive *The gravedigger then changes the meaning in his line to mean fast. A hasty lie.*

Hamlet does not know at this point that they are digging Ophelia's grave. The gravediggers do not recognize Hamlet.

CUT LINES: The gravedigger tells Hamlet, without knowing who he is, that Hamlet had been sent to England because he was mad.

by the card: to the point

equivocation: a statement that is not completely false, but does avoid the truth



help@theatrefolk.com www.theatrefolk.com

Want to Read More?

Order a full script through the link above. You can get a **PDF file** (it's printable, licensed for one printout, and delivered instantly) or a **traditionally bound and printed book** (sent by mail).