

# Hamlet

William Shakespeare



**EDU  
GATE**

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### Notes About the Author:

*William Shakespeare (1564-1616)* is an English playwright. He was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. He started his career when he moved to London. He was famous for the tragedies he wrote such as *King Lear*. He also wrote comedies and sonnets. He died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1616.

## The Main Characters in the Play

- **Hamlet**, Prince of Denmark
- **Claudius**, King of Denmark, brother of the late king and Hamlet's uncle
- The ghost of the late king
- **Gertrude**, the Queen, Hamlet's mother, new wife of Claudius
- **Polonius**, councilor of state
- **Laertes**, Polonius's son
- **Ophelia**, Polonius's daughter
- **Horatio**, Hamlet's friend
- **Rosencrantz and Guildenstern**, courtiers, school friends of Hamlet
- **Fortinbras**, Prince of Norway
- **Marcellus**, Bernardo, Francisco, members of the King's Guard

**Marcellus:** We have seen it twice but Horatio refuses to believe us. Tonight he will see it for himself and speak to it.

**Horatio:** Tush, tush... it will not appear.

**Bernardo:** Sit down and listen to our story.

**Horatio:** I am listening.

**Bernardo:** Just last night when the bells struck one o'clock...  
(Enter Ghost)

**Marcellus:** Look, it has come again!

**Bernardo:** It looks just like the late king. It wears his clothes.

**Marcellus:** You are a scholar Horatio – speak to it.

**Bernardo:** Doesn't it look like the king? Look at it Horatio.

**Horatio:** Very much. It fills me with fear and wonder.

**Marcellus:** Question it.

**Horatio:** Who is it that comes resembling the former king? By heaven, speak!

**Marcellus:** It is offended.

**Bernardo:** It is going away.

**Horatio:** Stay... speak to us.

**Bernardo:** You look afraid Horatio. Do you still think it is only our imagination?

**Horatio:** I could not believe without seeing it with my own eyes.

**Marcellus:** It looks like the late king, does it not?

**Horatio:** Yes. It is very strange.

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Do you think ghosts are real? Why?

**King:** Mourning is commendable but to continue grieving is stubborn and unmanly. Think of us as your father now and remember you are next in line to the throne. We also ask that you do not return to school in Wittenberg.

**Queen:** Yes, please remain here with us, my son.

**Hamlet:** I will obey you madam.

**King:** This reply fills me with joy. Come madam, today we will celebrate with festivities.

(Exit all but Hamlet)

**Hamlet:** Oh, I would like to die but suicide is a sin. Why did my great father have to die? My mother married my uncle only two months after his death. This cannot come to any good. Though it breaks my heart, I must hold my tongue.

(Enter Horatio, Marcellus and Bernardo)

**Horatio:** Hail to your lordship.

**Hamlet:** Horatio my friend! What brings you here from Wittenberg?

**Horatio:** I came for your father's funeral my lord.

**Hamlet:** Do you not mean my mother's wedding where the **leftovers** from the funeral were served cold?

**Horatio:** It was a very short time after, my lord.

**Hamlet:** I think I see my father, Horatio.

**Horatio:** Where?!

**Hamlet:** In my mind's eye.

**Horatio:** My lord, I have seen him.

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Why is Hamlet still mourning his father till now?

**Laertes:** I must go.

(Enter Polonius)

**Polonius:** Are you still here Laertes? You must leave now.

**Laertes:** I take my leave my lord. Ophelia, remember what we spoke of.

(Exit Laertes)

**Polonius:** What has Laertes said to you?

**Ophelia:** It regarded Hamlet.

**Polonius:** What is there between you two?

**Ophelia:** He has said he loves me.

**Polonius:** Do not believe his insincere **vows**. For your honor, you must **rebuff** his attentions.

**Ophelia:** I shall obey my lord.

## Scene IV

The platform.

(Enter Hamlet, Horatio and Marcellus)

**Hamlet:** The clock has struck twelve; it is almost the hour.

**Horatio:** Yes. The wind is cold and bitter this night.

**Marcellus:** Look my lord! It comes this way!

(Enter Ghost)

**Hamlet:** Heaven defend us! I do not know if you are a good or evil spirit, nor your intentions. Your appearance is questionable but I will call you

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Why is the late King's spirit restless?

strangely. You are his friends and have the same age; we want you to discover what ails him.

**Queen:** Gentlemen, he often speaks of you. There is no one he trusts more. Surely he will speak openly with you.

**Rosencrantz:** Your wish is our command your majesty.

**Guildenstern:** We give ourselves completely to your wishes.

**King and Queen:** Thank you.

(Enter Polonius, exit Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)

**Polonius:** The ambassadors have returned from Norway my lord – there is good news.

**King:** I long to hear it.

(Enter ambassadors Voltimand and Cornelius)

**Voltimand:** My lord, Fortinbras's uncle, the king, has rebuked the young prince for wanting to make war on Denmark. The nephew has vowed never to attack us. The king, overcome with joy, has given him an annual income and told him to use his army to attack Poland. He asks only that we allow his army to pass through Denmark.

**King:** This news pleases us. We will see to it in more detail later.

(Exit ambassadors Voltimand and Cornelius)

**Polonius:** I will arrive at the point, my lord. Your son is mad.

**Queen:** Please explain what you mean.

**Polonius:** Hamlet's love for my daughter, Ophelia, has driven him to madness. He has written numerous letters and poems to her showing his

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Describe Polonius in one sentence.

## Act III

### Scene I

A room in the castle.

(Enter King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)

**King:** And you are not able to discover why he puts on this confusion?

**Rosencrantz:** He confesses he feels mad but will not say from what, my lord.

**Queen:** Did you encourage him in some pleasant pastime?

**Guildenstern:** He seemed to take much pleasure in the players that arrived.

**King:** This makes me happy. Push him towards these delights whenever possible.

**Rosencrantz:** We shall, my lord.

(Exit Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)

**King:** Leave us, too, sweet Gertrude. We have secretly sent for Hamlet and will watch as he meets Ophelia. We will see if love causes his madness.

**Queen:** I shall obey. Ophelia, I hope your beauty is the cause of his madness and your virtue will return him to sanity.

**Ophelia:** I wish it may, madam.

(Exit Queen Gertrude)

**Polonius:** Walk here Ophelia and read this book. We will hide and watch. I hear him coming. Let's withdraw, my lord.

**Hamlet:** To be, or not to be – that is the question. Is it better to suffer the

*My notes*



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Comment on Ophelia's character.



hardships of life or to combat them by dying? To die, to sleep – that is the obstacle. We do know what follows death. For this we bear the hardships of life rather than visit the undiscovered country from which no one returns. In the end, conscience makes cowards of us all.

But silence now! The fair Ophelia comes.

**Ophelia:** Good day, my lord. How are you this day?

**Hamlet:** I am well.

**Ophelia:** I wish to return the things you have given me. Please take them.

**Hamlet:** I never gave you anything.

**Ophelia:** You know you did, my lord. Take them along with the sweet words spoken to me. Rich gifts become poor when the giver is unkind.

**Hamlet:** I did love you once!

**Ophelia:** You made me believe so.

**Hamlet:** You were mistaken to believe me; I never loved you!

**Ophelia:** Then I was deceived.

**Hamlet:** Go to a nunnery. Do not become a breeder of sinners. At least I am honest enough to admit I am full of defects! I am proud, vengeful and ambitious. Why should men such as I walk the Earth? We are all arrant knaves! Go to a nunnery!

**Ophelia:** Oh, heaven help him!

**Hamlet:** If you marry, marry a fool. Wise men understand what monsters you make of them! God gives you a face and you paint it to look more beautiful. You dance, amble and lisp. Away with you all! We should have

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Is there wisdom behind Hamlet's mad words? How?

13. Answer the questions. Use your exercise book.

a. Why did the King stop the play?

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b. What point is Hamlet trying to make when he asks Guildenstern to play the recorder?

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c. How does Hamlet feel towards his mother?

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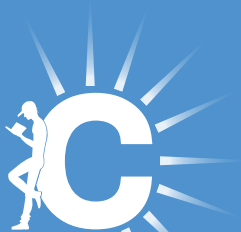
14. Hamlet has made a list of things he SHOULD and SHOULDN'T do while speaking with his mother but his notes are mixed up. Help him by putting ticks in the columns as appropriate.

**(Should - Shouldn't)**

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| a. Tell her I saw the Ghost                  | (.....) |
| b. Be unnatural                              | (.....) |
| c. Pretend to be mad                         | (.....) |
| d. Say what I really think of Claudius       | (.....) |
| e. Be cruel                                  | (.....) |
| f. Remind her what a great man my father was | (.....) |
| g. Apologize for all the trouble I've caused | (.....) |

## Glossary

- **adieu:** farewell, goodbye
- **amiss:** improper, not right
- **arrant:** complete
- **arras:** curtain used in Elizabethan times
- **breeder of:** creator of, one who gives birth to
- **did the king's bidding:** acted according to the king's order
- **distemper:** madness
- **doomed:** condemned
- **dour:** grim
- **dumbshow:** (here) actors involved in the silent show that precedes main presentation
- **fishmonger:** seller of fish
- **foreboding:** apprehension, bad feeling (about the future)
- **foul:** unclean, evil
- **hardship:** difficulty
- **late:** deceased, dead
- **leftovers:** food remaining from a previous meal
- **lust:** sexual desire
- **nunnery:** convent
- **piteous:** pathetic
- **rotten:** (here) bad, corrupt
- **slanders:** cruel, untrue statements
- **Slaughter:** massacre



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