Each year, our education program, The Open Door Project, reaches 5,000–6,000 students in over 70 campuses in the Greater Philadelphia area. In the last twenty years over 80,000 high school and middle school students have been served. Our curriculum is approved by 10 area school districts and complies with the common core curriculum. The Theatre received a Resolution from the City Council of Philadelphia honoring the theatre for its commitment to producing excellent Shakespeare productions and education programming, and making both accessible to all. We also received the Excellence in Theatre Education and Community Service Award, sponsored by the Virginia and Harvey Kimmel Arts Education Fund for The Open Door Project.

**STUDENT MATINEES**

Each school year, we offer 50 full-scale matinee performances (Spring and Fall productions) complete with original music, sets and costumes, where students experience the same professional productions that our adult audiences see. Each matinee is followed by a talkback with the actors, director, and the education director. Each student who attends a matinee receives one of our teacher-approved study guides that gives an in-depth look at the play, and provides focus for the classroom teacher. It includes a plot synopsis, textual history, the play's themes, interactive activities, interviews and questions. It meets the PA standards for reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

**IN-SCHOOL RESIDENCIES**

Our teaching artists lead students in hands-on performance activities that support the Common Core Curriculum, and provide a complete immersion experience with Shakespeare's plays, synthesizing the kinesthetic, emotional, psychological, social and analytical dimensions of learning that are needed to educate the whole child.

**SCHOOL TOUR**

Our school tour brings live theatre into auditoriums, cafeterias, and gymnasiums. Our 75-minute adaptations of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are performed by four professional actors and are followed by a discussion with the actors. Many students say seeing the play performed live helps them to not only understand the plot and language, but to feel emotions that they could not access when the words lived only on the page.

**TEACHER WORKSHOP**

Each fall (November) we partner with The Folger Shakespeare Library to present The Shakespeare Set Free Workshop to demonstrate a new way of teaching Shakespeare and offer a wealth of practical resources for teachers. The workshop provides teachers with ACT 48 Credits, free tickets to our shows, a Page to Stage Handbook, DVDs, and a flash drive loaded with teaching resources.

**THE MISSION OF THE PHILADELPHIA SHAKESPEARE THEATRE IS “TO BE A WORLD-CLASS SHAKESPEARE COMPANY, AND TO BRING OUR EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO EVERY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT IN THE REGION.”**

To discover how to bring the theatre to your school or for more info, contact our Education Director, Rebekah Wilcox, at 215-496-9722 Ext. 103 or rebekah@phillyshakespeare.org.

---

**Hamlet Study Guide**

This study guide is designed to aid students in understanding and appreciating Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Key characters include:** Hamlet, Ophelia, Claudius, Gertrude, Horatio, Laertes, Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.** Topics covered in the study guide include the play's themes, characters, language, and historical context.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pennsylvania Department of Education Standards ............................................................... p. 3

A Little Bit About the Bard ....................................................................................................... p. 4-5

Shakespeare & Theatre: Then and Now .............................................................................. p. 6-7

Directorial Vision: Carmen Khan .............................................................................................. p. 8

Staging Questions ........................................................................................................................ p. 9

Introduction to *Hamlet* .............................................................................................................. p. 10

Who’s Who in *Hamlet* ................................................................................................................ p. 11

*Hamlet* Plot Analysis ............................................................................................................. p. 12-13

Character Relationship Map ...................................................................................................... p. 14

Character Development Sketch ............................................................................................... p. 15

To Be or Not To Be: Soliloquy Challenge ................................................................................. p. 16-20

Ghastly Ghostly: Art Board Activity ........................................................................................ p. 21

Thematic Analysis Questions .................................................................................................... p. 22-23

Themes and a Look at Language ............................................................................................. p. 24-25

Fake News: In Search of the Truth .......................................................................................... p. 26

Freeze Frame ............................................................................................................................... p. 27

Five-Minute *Hamlet* ............................................................................................................... p. 28-30

Take-home RAFT Activity ......................................................................................................... p. 31

Shakespeare in the Classroom .................................................................................................. p. 32

Final Takeaway ........................................................................................................................... p. 33

Student Questions ...................................................................................................................... p. 34

Classroom Resources .............................................................................................................. p. 35

Study Guide Sources ................................................................................................................. p. 36
The material in this study guide is designed to meet the following Pennsylvania Academic Standards:

Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening

• Students will use knowledge of root words and words from literary works to recognize and understand the meaning of new words. (1.1.11 C)

• Students will identify, describe, evaluate, and synthesize the essential ideas in text. (1.1.11 D)

• Students will read and understand works of literature. (1.3.11 A)

• Students will analyze the effectiveness, in terms of literary quality, of the author’s use of literary devices. (1.3.11 C)

• Students will analyze and evaluate in poetry the appropriateness of diction and figurative language (e.g., irony, understatement, overstatement, paradox). (1.3.11 D)

• Students will analyze how a scriptwriter’s use of words creates tone and mood, and how choice of words advances the theme or purpose of the work. (1.3.11 F)

• Students will read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama. (1.3.11 F)

• Students will demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading. (1.1.11 H)

• Students will listen to others. (1.6.11 B)

• Students will contribute to discussion. (1.6.11 D)

• Students will participate in small and large group discussions and presentations. (1.6.11 E)
Shakespeare’s Life

We know very little about the life of William Shakespeare, however, more is known about him than many of his contemporaries. His birthday is historically attributed to April 23, 1564, and supposedly, he died on the same day in 1616. As the eldest child of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, he was raised in the market town of Stratford-on-Avon, which lies approximately ninety miles northwest of London. He most likely attended the town’s grammar school where he would have been instructed in Latin and the Classics.

In November of 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, and in May of 1583 they had their first child, Susanna. Two years later the fraternal twins, Hamnet and Judith, were born. It is unclear exactly when Shakespeare began his career in drama, but at some point he went to London and began working as an actor and playwright. By 1595 he was a shareholder in The Lord Chamberlain’s Men. Sadly, in 1596, his son Hamnet died. Many have wondered about the connection between Hamnet’s early death and his father’s subsequent dark tragedy, Hamlet.

Shakespeare is known worldwide as an excellent playwright and poet, but the exact number of plays that he wrote is still subject to some debate. Scholars would like to determine which plays Shakespeare wrote alone and which he co-authored with other playwrights. Most experts agree that Shakespeare penned 38 plays, 5 long poems, and 154 sonnets, which serves as a good reference point for understanding how prolific a writer he was. William Shakespeare’s popularity has yet to wane, hundreds of years later, and his works continue to be important for students, dramatists, and audiences around the world.
Questions about Shakespeare in Modern Culture

1. Name three modern movies that are inspired by one of Shakespeare’s plays.

   1. ____________________________
   2. ____________________________
   3. ____________________________

2. Name three phrases we use today that come directly from Shakespeare’s work, and name the play or sonnet that the phrase came from.

   1. ____________________________
   2. ____________________________
   3. ____________________________

3. Identify three songs written in the last 20 years that refer to a character from one of Shakespeare’s plays or use direct quotes from his plays. Name the song and the Shakespeare reference.

   1. ____________________________
   2. ____________________________
   3. ____________________________
Playwrights alive during the Elizabethan era worked in a very different way than playwrights do today. Instead of producing a play independently, they were first required to present a company with their idea for a plot. The leading actors and managers would then decide whether they liked it or not, and offer a down payment for its completion.

This close relationship between the writer and the performers meant that writers often created their characters with certain actors in mind. For instance, knowing that The Lord Chamberlain’s Men’s leading man, Richard Burbage, had a strong memory for long scripts, Shakespeare created the parts of Richard III and Hamlet for him. These parts involve lengthy soliloquies that might have strained another actor. As Burbage aged, Shakespeare created more mature characters for him.

When Shakespeare finished a play it was not distributed to the actors in books. Instead, each player received only the lines for his own part. This meant that he would not see who else was going to be on the stage until they actually rehearsed the scene. Actors today might find it strange to be unable to read the entire work before rehearsing.

When Shakespeare was producing his plays there were some basic ideas he used that were part of Elizabethan staging techniques. We know this through testimonials from audiences of the time, how the theatres were built, and the actual directions within the plays themselves.

The actors could see the audience because a number of the productions were performed outside in daylight. It is also another dynamic way to experience Shakespeare’s plays directly. We know that the plays were performed on a large wooden platform with only a few key set pieces to represent major areas (a bed, a tomb, etc.). There is a freedom in this, as the audience has to listen to the language and imagine the scenes being enacted.
Shakespeare’s company was comprised of all men and boys, because women were legally prevented from being on stage. We do not believe that Shakespeare preferred casting men over women. Think of the incredible female characters he wrote. If he were alive today we think he would have liked Meryl Streep to play Lady Macbeth! Women are allowed onstage now and we embrace all of Shakespeare’s exploration of gender in a variety of ways.

The costumes helped the audiences, as they do now, to “read” the characters positions in society and who they were. They are used to show rich and poor, royalty or peasantry, and a myriad of other character clues. Costumes in Shakespeare’s time were not used to show what a particular historical period was like. They performed Julius Caesar, for example, in primarily Elizabethan clothing and not ancient Roman. For them, as for us, the play always spoke to the present. That’s why we use costumes that speak to our audiences in the most familiar language possible while staying consistent with the words in the play.

Musicians who played above the stage provided the music for Shakespeare’s plays. Music was played before, during, and after the production. We know there were a variety of instruments — string, wind, and percussion. Some of the music survives, but not much, and we have the lyrics of songs within the plays. We choose the music and the instruments based on what the actors can play and what we think suits the message of the play. Our composers and sound designers are guided by the text as the director envisions it. (Based on notes from ASC writing on Original Practices and Original Staging/Practices: Thesis by Angel VanBennekom)

Julius Caesar may have been the first production performed at the famous Globe Theatre. Construction was finished earlier in 1599 and made use of timber taken from the company’s former theatre. The Lord Chamberlain’s Men were housed at the theatre until a question of the building’s ownership caused a dispute with the landlord. The outraged players dismantled the building and secreted the materials to a new Bankside location. This new space could house up to 3,000 audience members who would stand or sit depending on their ticket. The cheapest tickets allowed attendees to stand on the ground directly in front of and to the sides of the stage.

The Globe was the most magnificent venue London had ever seen. Unfortunately it burned down in 1613 when a canon misfired during Henry VIII. After successfully rebuilding, the theatre was then shut down in 1642 by the Puritans and pulled down in 1644. Part of the original foundation was discovered in 1989, and a modern reconstruction was finished in 1997 less than 1,000 feet from the original site.

The American actor and director, Sam Wanamaker, made it his mission to recreate The Globe on the bank of the Thames. This reincarnation of the theatre is connected to the indoor Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, which houses various non-Shakespeare performances throughout the year. The revamped Globe holds performances during warmer months and offers tours of their exhibition and performance spaces to the public all year long.
DIRECTORIAL VISION: CARMEN KHAN

In this adaptation of *Hamlet* for our school touring production, there have been many exciting challenges for us to tackle. Before we could even start the process, we first had to evaluate and answer many questions, such as:

1. **How can we perform a Shakespeare play in about 90 minutes, especially the greatest of the tragedies, *Hamlet***?
2. **How can we perform this play with only six actors?**
3. **How can we fit all costumes, props, and set into a small van with six actors and a Stage Manager?**
4. **How can we keep an auditorium of students attentive, interested, and engaged?**
5. **How can we make this Shakespeare play accessible to all high school students?**

We felt that the most important question was about the cutting of the script. We wanted the text to embody the core of the text, so we had to decide what is the story we want to tell, who are the most important characters and what are the key events? Then, what is the essence of the key event? If it wasn’t part of the essence it had to be cut.

We decided to focus on Hamlet’s overwhelming need, at all costs, to find out the truth. Once this was decided, we had to develop a working script. A storyboard was a good tool to start with. Then, as director, I produced a list of key events, which forced us to make hard decisions — what must absolutely stay and what could go? We have made every effort to adhere to Shakespeare’s words. It has been necessary though to make some changes in the service of clarity. Sometimes we have modernized words in order to make sure that attention wouldn’t wander too far. “Precepts” became “instructions”, “hebenon” became “poison”, “wrack” becomes “ruin”.

The Production:

The actors’ bodies and voices can create anything required to tell the story — the audience can imagine anything. In this way, we avoided realistic detail which in this production could have become cumbersome to us. We wanted the audience to envision the story. Every choice was about making things as simple as possible. We kept asking how can we do this simpler? There are six actors playing twelve roles. Hamlet is the only actor that doesn’t double. All actors play music or sing parts of songs to either enhance a particular theme or show the passing of time.

Because each actor must play multiple roles, we combined and eliminated characters. Simple and easily changed pieces of clothing were chosen that were iconic. We make use of colored scarves to depict character: Hamlet is purple, Ophelia is white, Polonius is pink, Rosencrantz is yellow, etc. The icons stand in for the character when multiple roles have to be played. We use simple devices for scenery and simple objects for props. It was important for us to physicalize the text and create images that tell the story.

There were some very hard choices as *Hamlet* is so full of marvelous storytelling and plot devices. We had to make our limitations the seeds of theatrical invention, and make sure everyone is involved in telling the story all the time. This is where determining the essence of each event became important. We then had to stage that essence, discarding everything else.

Artistic/Executive Director
of The Philadelphia Shakespeare Theatre
CARMEN KHAN
1. Can you think of other creative ways to interpret and present *Hamlet*?

2. Does the staging of this production call attention any particular aspect of the play?

3. What might be the challenges of deciding on a particular creative direction for a performance?

4. What sounds or sights did you experience during the performance that were especially effective for you to understand and enjoy the play?
INTRODUCTION TO *HAMLET*

What is *Hamlet* about? And why is it relevant to students today? There are myriad of ways to interpret *Hamlet*, but our interest and focus is to get as close to the truth of what Shakespeare intended based on the evidence in the text. *Hamlet* is about taking responsibility. He is thrust into a world that is broken. He is the only one who can fix it, and he is totally unprepared for it. It is a coming-of-age story, and that is why it resonates so profoundly with today’s teens. The world can be scary and there are so many things you don’t know; yet you are often expected to navigate these rough waters without much help. And just as Hamlet does, you may often feel alone on this tumultuous journey. There are many parallels in *Hamlet* to your life. Hamlet is thrust into a world that is broken. His father has died, his mother remarried soon after the funeral to his uncle, and warring nations are threatening the realm. Hamlet’s uncle, Claudius, is the one who has broken Hamlet’s world. Often Hamlet is accused of being indecisive because he doesn’t kill Claudius when he has the chance. But nothing could be further from the truth. Hamlet is not indecisive, he is cautious, and this is a huge lesson for students to learn from this play. We know this because of the presence of Laertes in the play, who is there to contrast with Hamlet. Laertes’ choice to create a riot without a second thought as soon as he hears about his father’s death is in direct contrast to Hamlet’s careful and intelligent thinking about all the facets of the situation. Hamlet looks at the evidence that is presented and uses that to make his choices. At some point we all have to take responsibility for ourselves and there is no one left to lean on or blame. Life is often complicated, and people are complex and unpredictable and contrary. Shakespeare writes people in all of their puzzling contradictory, messy glory. As you delve into the depths of who Hamlet is, you may see yourself not as one-dimensional but as if through a prism, multifaceted, with many colors to explore and reveal.
WHO’S WHO?

THE CHARACTERS IN SHAKESPEARE’S HAMLET

HAMLET: The prince of Denmark. Son of Queen Gertrude and nephew of King Claudius.

CLAUDIUS: King of Denmark and Hamlet’s uncle. Married to Hamlet’s mother.

GERTRUDE: Queen of Denmark and Hamlet’s mother. Married to Claudius, the brother of her deceased husband.

POLONIUS: King Claudius’ chief advisor. Father to Ophelia and Laertes.

LAERTES: Polonius’ son and Ophelia’s brother.

OPHELIA: Polonius’ daughter. She is in love with Hamlet.

THE GHOST OF KING HAMLET: The ghost of Hamlet’s dead father.

HORATIO: Hamlet’s best friend.

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN: Hamlet’s childhood friends from school. They spy on Hamlet for the King.

MARCELLUS AND BERNARDO: The King’s guard on the night watch.

OSRIC: A courtier.

THE PLAYERS: Actors hired by Hamlet to perform a play reenacting his father’s murder.

LUCIANUS: A character in the play-within-the-play.

THE GRAVEDIGGER: A man who digs Ophelia’s grave.

THE DOCTOR: A Doctor of Divinity, or priest.
ACT 1, SCENE 1: On a cold parapet in Denmark, soldiers Marcellus and Bernardo, along with the student Horatio, are confronted by the recently deceased King of Denmark. They determine to tell their news to the Prince, Hamlet.

ACT 1, SCENE 2: In the court, young Prince Hamlet is struggling with his mother’s hasty marriage to his uncle, Claudius. Horatio reports to Hamlet that he’s seen the ghost of the old King. Hamlet agrees to watch for him that night.

ACT 1, SCENE 3: In another part of the castle, Claudius’ adviser, Polonius, is bidding goodbye to his son, Laertes, who is returning to school, and cautioning his daughter, Ophelia, to be careful with the love Hamlet has professed for her.

ACT 1, SCENE 4/5: Back on the parapet, Hamlet’s father’s spirit appears to him. He tells Hamlet that Claudius murdered him, and bids him to revenge his death. Hamlet swears that he will. Moreover, Hamlet claims that, from henceforth, he will put an “antic-disposition” on, feigning madness to prepare for the murder.

ACT 2, SCENE 1: Ophelia reports to Polonius that Hamlet came into her chamber acting strangely. Polonius determines that Hamlet has been driven mad for his love of Ophelia and decides to report these findings to the King.

ACT 2, SCENE 2: To find the source of Hamlet’s lunacy, Gertrude and Claudius send for his childhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to spy on him. Polonius tells the King and Queen that he thinks that Ophelia is the cause of all of Hamlet’s troubles.

ACT 2, SCENE 2: The players act out something similar to the murder of King Hamlet. Claudius stands and leaves the play early. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come to tell Hamlet that his mother wants to see him. He, having discovered their treacherousness, calls them out on having broken his trust.

ACT 3, SCENE 1: In order to test whether Ophelia is the cause of Hamlet’s madness, Claudius and Polonius watch while she returns some love tokens to Hamlet (who is already distraught and thinking of suicide: “To be or not to be”). Upset, Hamlet tells Ophelia to go to a nunnery where she can’t harm any more men. This convinces Claudius that Hamlet has gone mad for some other reason, while Polonius still believes that his (very upset) Ophelia is the cause.

ACT 3, SCENE 2: Hamlet encounters Claudius praying. He thinks of killing him but is afraid Claudius’ soul will go to heaven. Hamlet delays, and Claudius fails to pray successfully.
**ACT 3, SCENE 4:** In the Queen’s room, Hamlet tries to show her the evil of her ways. Gertrude, afraid of her son, calls for help. Polonius resounds the cry from behind a curtain where he has been watching the encounter. Hamlet, thinking Polonius is Claudius, kills him. Hamlet, still angry, continues to try to force his mother to see Claudius as he sees him. The Ghost appears again (though this time invisible to Gertrude) and tells Hamlet not to hurt his mother. Hamlet obeys and goes off to hide Polonius’ corpse.

**ACT 4, SCENE 1:** Gertrude reveals to Claudius that Hamlet has slain Polonius. The royals, along with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, go to seek him out.

**ACT 4, SCENE 2:** The pursuit of Hamlet continues.

**ACT 4, SCENE 3:** Hamlet reveals where he has hid the body and is shipped off, accompanied by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to England where (unbeknownst to him) Claudius has conspired to have him executed.

**ACT 4, SCENE 4:** Fortinbras, the young prince of Norway, marches towards Denmark to attempt to win back a piece of land he feels is rightfully his. Fortinbras’ hot-headed action makes Hamlet reflect on his cooling purpose.

**ACT 4, SCENE 5:** Ophelia presents herself to the King and Queen. Grief over her father’s death at the hand of her lost love has driven her mad. Her brother, Laertes, storms in and challenges Claudius who, he believes, has killed his father. The sight of his suffering sister shocks him into listening further to Claudius’ explanation of who the culprit is.

**ACT 4, SCENE 6:** Horatio receives news from Hamlet. He explains that, on the trip to England, his ship was encountered by pirates who received him onto their ship to bring him home to Denmark without Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who still hold course for England.

**ACT 4, SCENE 7:** Claudius convinces Laertes that Hamlet is responsible for Polonius’ death and that Laertes should kill him in recompense. Their meeting is interrupted by Gertrude, who has just witnessed Ophelia drown.

**ACT 5, SCENE 1:** Hamlet returns to Denmark on the day of Ophelia’s funeral. He and Laertes have a physical brawl in Ophelia’s grave over who loved her best and acts the most in her honor.

**ACT 5, SCENE 2:** A foppish courtier arrives to present Laertes’ challenge of a fencing match to Hamlet. Horatio reminds him that he can refuse but Hamlet protests that “readiness is all.” Laertes and the King and Queen enter to watch the fencing match. Laertes has poisoned and sharpened the blade he’ll be using, and Claudius has poisoned a drink he plans to give to Hamlet. Hamlet wins the first bout and Claudius attempts to give him the drink, but Gertrude intercepts it and drinks the poison. Hamlet wins a couple more bouts and Laertes, enraged, attacks and wounds him with the poisoned sword during a break. Hamlet, in revenge, takes the poisoned blade and wounds Laertes. Gertrude dies from the poisoned drink, Laertes confesses to the plot and incriminates Claudius. Hamlet stabs Claudius with the poisoned blade and forces him to drink from the poisoned cup. Laertes and Hamlet forgive each other for each other’s deaths. Hamlet gives his kingdom to Fortinbras and dies in Horatio’s arms.
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT SKETCH

CHOOSE A CHARACTER FROM HAMLET. CUT AND PASTE A PHOTO OR DRAW THE CHARACTER (STICK FIGURES ARE OKAY) IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS PAGE AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CHARACTER YOU CHOSE.

**BRAIN:** What/who is your character thinking about?

**SHOULDER:** What does your character worry about?

**RIGHT HAND:** Who/what is your character’s “right hand man/”

**ACHILLES HEEL:** What/who has helped shape your character?

**HEART:** What does your character care most about?

**EYES:** How does your character see the world?

**MOUTH:** What is something memorable your character said?

**LEFT HAND:** What/who has your character “left“ behind?

**FEET:** What significant life events has your character experienced?
SOLILOQUY
A soliloquy in a play happens when a character shares his or her thoughts and feelings out loud so the audience can hear them, but other characters cannot. The purpose of any soliloquy is to uncover the thoughts, feelings, personality, mindset, and motivations of a character. In Hamlet, soliloquies help us understand Hamlet’s anguish concerning his father’s death, mother’s remarriage, and desire for revenge. These soliloquies are essential for moving the plot forward.

MATERIALS
• Copies of seven soliloquies from Hamlet (provided on pages 17-20)

GROUP ACTIVITY
1. As a class, discuss what Hamlet reveals in his soliloquies. Think about who the character can choose to talk to when speaking an aside or soliloquy.

2. Break up into seven groups for the seven different soliloquies found on pages 17-20. In your groups, look at the context in which this soliloquy is found. Who is the character speaking to? Think about how to convey who you are speaking to. Where do you look? What is the volume of speech? What is your intention? Are there any words you don’t know? List and define them.

3. Have a volunteer from each group practice and perform your assigned soliloquy to its intended audience (The Audience, Higher Power, or Himself).

QUESTIONS TO CLASS FOR EACH PERFORMANCE
• Was their intended audience clear? How could it be made clearer?
• Why is Hamlet speaking to The Audience/Higher Power/Himself?
• Is there a way the performer can make the intended audience clearer?
• What is the importance of this soliloquy? How does this soliloquy assist the plot?

DISCUSSION POINTS
• How many valid options exist for the director/actor?
• How does each interpretation alter the play?
• Why is it important as an actor to consider who Hamlet is speaking to?
HAMLET: ACT 1, Scene 2

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!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on’t! ah fie! ‘tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month--
Let me not think on’t--Frailty, thy name is woman!--
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow’d my poor father’s body,
Like Niobe, all tears:--why she, even she--
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:
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not nor it cannot come to good:
But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue.

HAMLET: ACT 1, Scene 5

O all you host of heaven! O earth! what else?
And shall I couple hell? O, fie! Hold, hold, my heart;
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee!
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee!
Yea, from the table of my memory
I’ll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there;
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix’d with baser matter: yes, by heaven!
O most pernicious woman!
O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!
My tables,--meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;
At least I’m sure it may be so in Denmark:

(Writing)

So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word;
It is ‘Adieu, adieu! remember me.’
I have sworn ‘t.
HAMLET: ACT 2, Scene 2

Now I am alone.  
O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!  
Is it not monstrous that this player here,  
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,  
Could force his soul so to his own conceit  
That from her working all his visage wann’d,  
Tears in his eyes, distraction in’s aspect,  
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting  
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!  
For Hecuba!  
What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,  
That he should weep for her? What would he do,  
Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears  
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,  
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,  
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed  
The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,  
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,  
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,  
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,  
Upon whose property and most dear life  
A damn’d defeat was made. Am I a coward?  
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?  
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?  
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i’ the throat,  
As deep as to the lungs? who does me this?  
Ha!  
‘Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be  
But I am pigeon-liver’d and lack gall  
To make oppression bitter, or ere this  
I should have fatted all the region kites  
With this slave’s offal: bloody, bawdy villain!  
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!  
O, vengeance!  
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,  
That I, the son of a dear father murder’d,  
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,  
And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,  
A scullion!  
Fie upon’t! foh! About, my brain! 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;  
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak  
With most miraculous organ. 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 blench,  
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen  
May be the devil: and the devil hath power  
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps  
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  
As he is very potent with such spirits,  
Abuses me to damn me: I’ll have grounds  
More relative than this: the play ’s the thing  
Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.
HAMLET: ACT 3, Scene 1

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, ‘tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish’d. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there’s the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there’s the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law’s delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover’d country from whose bourn
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;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.--Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember’d.

HAMLET: ACT 3, Scene 2

Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother.
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:
Let me be cruel, not unnatural:
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: ACT 3, Scene 3

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying; And now I’ll do’t. And so he goes to heaven; And so am I revenged. That would be scann’d: A villain kills my father; and for that, I, his sole son, do this same villain send To heaven.
O, this is hire and salary, not revenge. He took my father grossly, full of bread; With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May; And how his audit stands who knows save heaven? But in our circumstance and course of thought, ‘Tis heavy with him: and am I then revenged, To take him in the purging of his soul, When he is fit and season’d for his passage? No!
Up, sword; and know thou a more horrid hent: When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage, Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed; At gaming, swearing, or about some act That has no relish of salvation in’t; 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: ACT 4, Scene 4

How all occasions do inform against me, And spur my dull revenge! What is a man, If his chief good and market of his time Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more. Sure, he that made us with such large discourse, Looking before and after, gave us not That capability and god-like reason To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple Of thinking too precisely on the event, A thought which, quarter’d, hath but one part wisdom And ever three parts coward, I do not know Why yet I live to say ‘This thing’s to do;’ Sith I have cause and will and strength and means To do’t. Examples gross as earth exhort me: Witness this army of such mass and charge Led by a delicate and tender prince, Whose spirit with divine ambition puff’d Makes mouths at the invisible event, Exposing what is mortal and unsure To all that fortune, death and danger dare, Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great Is not to stir without great argument, But greatly to find quarrel in a straw When honour’s at the stake. How stand I then, That have a father kill’d, a mother stain’d, Excitements of my reason and my blood, And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see The imminent death of twenty thousand men, That, for a fantasy and trick of fame, Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause, Which is not tomb enough and continent To hide the slain? O, from this time forth, My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!
IN ACT 1, WE ARE INTRODUCED TO THE GHOST OF HAMLET’S FATHER. HIS CONVERSATION WITH HAMLET IS ESSENTIAL TO BEGIN THE PLOT OF THE STORY.

The Ghost of Hamlet’s father informs Hamlet that he was in fact murdered and he is in purgatory because he was unable to ask forgiveness for his sins before he died. To release him of this state, the Ghost tells Hamlet that he must enact revenge on his behalf. Hamlet believes the ghost is his father, but does question at one point whether the ghost is actually a demon. Over the years, directors have presented the ghost in a variety of ways. He has been presented just as he may have looked in life and as a terrifying demon-like image. Some claim Shakespeare himself originally played the ghost (though this is still debated by scholars). When you read the play, how do you imagine the ghost? How important is the ghost to the plot? Why? Is the ghost in fact Hamlet’s father or is he some type of demon? Why do you think this?

ACTIVITY: You are going to create a Pinterest Board that shows the class your interpretation of the ghost in Hamlet. Look at the example below, and then create your own board including the image instructions listed below. Don’t forget to write in the comment section for each selected image as per #4’s instructions.

1. Images of the ghost in Hamlet that someone else created.

2. Images that represent what comes to mind for you when you think of the ghost. This can be literal or abstract.

3. Images you would use to create your own ghost if you were directing Hamlet.

4. Under each image, comment with why you chose that image and quote a line from the play that supports your decision.

5. Present board to the class.
THEMATIC ANALYSIS

General Introduction

Themes are important ideas that act as a point of focus in a work of art. Studying Shakespeare's texts is not only a study in rich language and drama, but also a study in various themes that highlight our shared humanity. His works incorporate themes that are universally relevant and timeless, which is why he continues to be an important playwright to this day. Depending on which play you read, you might find yourself exploring themes like: love, power, identity crisis, and gender dynamics among many, many more! A few themes apparent in *Hamlet* are: truth, corruption, death, family, friendship, revenge, action and inaction, and reality vs. illusion. Of course, you may also notice other themes during the performance!

**Thematic Analysis Questions**

1. What do you think is the most significant theme presented in *Hamlet*?

2. How is that theme incorporated throughout the play?

3. Is this theme something that you might find in modern movies, plays, or books as well? Can you provide an example of a movie, play, book, or other source that demonstrates your theme?
4. How do the setting/costume/props, etc. enhance one of the themes that you noticed in the play?

5. How are these thematic elements important for the success of the performance?

Themes and a Look at Language

REALITY VS. ILLUSION: Throughout Hamlet, the characters are all trying to figure out what others are truly thinking rather than just what they appear to be thinking. They spy and plot in an effort to try to figure each other out. Hamlet is searching for the truth about his father’s death and reality seems to get more and more unclear as the play progresses.

HONOR OR REVENGE: Like any society, the people of Hamlet’s Denmark follow a certain code to life. This is clear in the text when Claudius tells Hamlet how to show grief, or when Polonius tells Laertes about the rules of behavior at the university for instance. And, of course, Hamlet constantly lectures himself. Hamlet is torn because he feels he must enact revenge to honor his father, but his religion teaches against revenge.

WOMEN: It is interesting to look at the women in Hamlet. For Hamlet, they are untrustworthy and only distort reality. The fact that Gertrude marries Claudius so soon after his father’s death, causes Hamlet to become distrustful of women as a whole. Though, the fact that Gertrude marries so quickly shows the status of women at the time. Marrying Claudius was the only way for Gertrude to remain Queen. Was it a matter of survival? Likewise, Ophelia, though grief stricken over her father’s death, waits for her brother Laertes to take revenge rather than acting herself. What does the action or inaction of these women tell us about women in this society?
LANGUAGE OF THE PAST
Language and Theme Quotes

Identify the speaker and theme of each quote. (Note: Some of the quotes demonstrate more than one of the three listed themes. Look closely to what is said to identify ALL themes that may be present. Are there other themes you can also identify in these lines?).

Act 1, Scene 2
“Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,--
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,—“"

Speaker: 
Theme(s): 

Act 2, Scene 1
“That hath made him mad.
I am sorry that with better heed and judgment
I had not quoted him: I fear'd he did but trifle,
And meant to wreck thee; but, beshrew my jealousy!
By heaven, it is as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions
As it is common for the younger sort
To lack discretion. 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.”

Speaker: 
Theme(s): 

Act 1, Scene 5
“If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and damned incest.
But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:
Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me.”

Speaker: 
Theme(s): 

Act 2, Scene 2
“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;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. 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 blench,
I know my course.”

Speaker: 
Theme(s):
Act 3, Scene 1

“I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.”

Speaker:
Theme(s):

Act 4, Scene 5

“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; Which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield them, Indeed would make one think there might be thought, Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.”

Speaker:
Theme(s):

Act 4, Scene 7

“Oh, for two special reasons; Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinew'd, But yet to me they are strong. The queen his mother Lives almost by his looks; and for myself— My virtue or my plague, be it either which— She's so conjunctive to my life and soul, That, as the star moves not but in his sphere, I could not but by her. The other motive, Why to a public count I might not go, Is the great love the general gender bear him; Who, dipping all his faults in their affection, Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone, Convert his gyves to graces; so that my arrows, Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind, Would have reverted to my bow again, And not where I had aim’d them.”

Speaker:
Theme(s):
FAKE NEWS
In Search of the Truth

ONE MAJOR THEME WE FOCUS ON IN OUR PRODUCTION OF HAMLET IS THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH. Hamlet suspects foul play in his father’s death and is determined to do anything to learn the truth. He insists on visiting his father’s ghost with the guards and learns that his uncle murdered his father. Still unsure of what is reality and what is illusion, Hamlet hires actors to put on a play for King Claudius. The play is a reenactment of the ghost’s account of his father’s murder. Once he sees Claudius’ guilty reaction to the play, Hamlet is convinced his uncle did in fact kill his father.

1. Look through news stories from the past year.

2. Find a national story that may or may not be true.

3. Summarize the story and answer the following questions:

A. Where does the story take place?
B. Who are the people involved in the story?
C. What evidence is available to prove, beyond doubt, that the story is true or false?
D. How is the same story presented by different news sources? What efforts have they made to verify their claims?
E. What do you believe is true or false about the story? Why?

4. Now take a look at the plot of Hamlet:

A. What story is Hamlet trying to prove?
B. What evidence does he have?
C. Who agrees with him?
D. What really happened? Do you as the reader know the truth by the end of the play? Explain why or why not.

5. With fake new stories on the rise, what steps can you take to verify the truth of news stories, photographs, and other sources of information found across online/print/television/radio mediums?
FREEZE FRAME

In theatre, a **tableau** is a visual “freeze frame” of a scene within a play. Participants in a tableau create a still image with their bodies to represent pieces of the plot. There is no sound or movement. It is as if someone took a photo in the middle of the story.

**TABLEAU ACTIVITY:** *Hamlet* has 5 Acts and 20 Scenes. In the following activity, you will tell the entire story in 15 tableaus. (This activity should be done after you have finished reading the play.)

- Break up into five groups.
- Each group take one of the Acts from *Hamlet* so all five are covered.
- In your group, review the main plot points in each Act.
- Using everyone in your group, create three tableaus that will tell the story of your Act as beginning, middle, and end. Think about which characters should be in your tableau and what each of them should be doing in this “freeze frame” from your part of the story. What verb (action) would you use to describe what each character is doing in the scene? What facial expressions are they making? Write down lines from the play that directly correlates with each of your tableaus.
- You will have 15 minutes to rehearse.
- You will perform your tableaus with your instructor and four other groups as your audience.

**QUESTIONS FOR THE AUDIENCE:**

1. What is happening in this tableau?
2. Who is who in the scene?
3. What works well in each tableau?
4. Would you do anything differently?

**QUESTIONS FOR PERFORMING GROUP:**

1. Why did you choose the positions you chose for each tableau?
2. What was the most difficult part of this exercise?
3. Is there anything you would do differently now that you’ve heard feedback?
4. What lines from the play directly relate to this tableau?
**FIVE-MINUTE HAMLET**

**DON'T HAVE 4 ½ HOURS TO PERFORM HAMLET AS A CLASS? TRY THIS 5-MINUTE VERSION!**

1. Divide the class into two groups with approximately 15 students in each group.

2. Hand out copies of the 5-Minute *Hamlet* (provided on pages 29-30). Assign the first group the portion of text leading up to and including Hamlet’s line, “Get thee to a nunnery!” Assign the second group the remaining text, beginning with the narration following the “nunnery” line.

3. First, assign parts for each group (cast both groups at the same time, so that you assign two Hamlets, two Gertrudes, etc.) There are nine speaking roles and the possibility of additional non-speaking roles (e.g. soldiers, court attendants, players, and gravedigger). The narration lines may also be divided further.

4. Begin by having the first group take the stage. Model direction by asking questions about blocking, body language, how lines should be delivered, etc. Have actors write down their blocking in their scripts. Also determine whether or not the group will be acting out the narration or just the scenes with lines.

5. Have the second group come up to the stage and continue to the end.

6. If there is time, have the groups perform from start to finish with all the blocking that was added. Or, if there is not enough time, ask for volunteers to perform the play in two minutes (remove all narration lines and perform only the text as quickly as possible).

6. Possible alternative: Have one group of silent actors that act out all of the narration, and have another group of actors play all of the speaking roles.

**DISCUSSION POINTS AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- Do you think that this is a good summary of the play?
- Are there moments that you would have cut or included?
- What would you be missing if you were to only read this synopsis and not the entire play?
- How are the characters represented in this version?
- What is the director’s job?
- How does she/he influence the storytelling?
NARRATOR 1
Long, long ago in the land of Denmark, two guards were doing their nightly round of Elsinore castle. Suddenly a ghost appeared before them! They stopped. Looked. And ran away.

NARRATOR 2
It was the ghost of prince Hamlet’s dead father. An astonishing thing had happened: only weeks after Hamlet’s father’s death, Claudius, his uncle, and his mother, Gertrude, were married.

CLAUDIUS
Our sometimes sister, now our Queen, Have we taken to wife.

NARRATOR 1
Nobody had asked Hamlet what he thought about it, coming so soon after his father’s death.

HAMLET
That it should come to this. But two months dead! So loving to my mother. Frailty, thy name is woman. Married with mine uncle; my father’s brother.

NARRATOR 2
Just then, Horatio, a school friend of Hamlet’s, came in, anxious to tell Hamlet about seeing his father’s ghost the night before.

HAMLET
‘Tis very strange.

NARRATOR 1
Horatio led Hamlet to the spot where the ghost had last been seen. Finally, the ghost of Hamlet’s father appeared.

GHOST
I am thy father’s spirit. Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

NARRATOR 2
Everyone in Denmark had been told that he had met his death from the sting of a serpent while he was napping in the palace garden. But really, Hamlet’s uncle Claudius had murdered his father by pouring poison in his ear as he slept.

HAMLET
O my prophetic soul! Mine uncle? Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

NARRATOR 1
Meantime, it seemed there was one person at Elsinore at whom Hamlet did smile, with whom he did exchange friendly words now and then.

NARRATOR 2
This was the pretty, gentle Ophelia, sister of Laertes and daughter of old Polonius.

POLONIUS
How now Ophelia? What’s the matter?

OPHELIA
My lord, as I was sewing in my closet, Lord Hamlet with his doublet all unbraced, Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other, To speak of horrors, he comes before me.

NARRATOR 1
Polonius now decided that Hamlet’s strange behavior all stemmed from the fact that he was mad with love.

NARRATOR 2
Just then, the players, a troupe of traveling actors, arrived.

HAMLET
We’ll hear a play tomorrow. I’ll have these players play something Like the murder of my father before mine uncle. The play’s the thing Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.

NARRATOR 1
Thinking himself alone, he began to speak his thoughts.

NARRATOR 2
And then he saw Ophelia.

OPHELIA
My lord...

NARRATOR 1
Hamlet realized that Claudius and Polonius were spying on them.

HAMLET
Get thee to a nunnery!

NARRATOR 2
But that night there was the play. The king and queen took their places. All the members of the court arranged themselves around them. It was clear that the play had not pleased the king, a fact that confirmed for Hamlet that Claudius was the murderer.

(continued on next page)
FIVE-MINUTE HAMLET

NARRATOR 1
Claudius stormed off and everyone else followed, except for Polonius who remained behind to spy on Hamlet as he went to his mother Gertrude’s bedroom.

GERTRUDE
Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET
Mother, you have my father much offended.

GERTRUDE
What, wilt thou murder me? Help!

NARRATOR 2
Just then, Polonius cried out, making his presence known!

HAMLET
How now? A rat!

NARRATOR 1
Hamlet stabs and kills Polonius!

GERTRUDE
O what a rash and bloody deed is this.

HAMLET
Good night, Mother.

NARRATOR 2
Hamlet’s killing of Polonius had convinced the king that no time must be lost in getting him out of Denmark.

CLAUDIUS
Hamlet, this deed must send thee hence. Therefore, prepare thyself, Everything is bent for England.

NARRATOR 1
As Hamlet leaves for England, Laertes, Ophelia’s brother, returns from France.

LAERTES
Where is my father?

CLAUDIUS
Dead.

NARRATOR 2
Just then, Ophelia enters in a mad trance, singing.

OPHELIA
No, no, he is dead, Go to thy death-bed, He never will come again. His beard was as white as snow.

NARRATOR 1
Ophelia drowns herself shortly after. Claudius and Laertes plot revenge against Hamlet, who has now returned from England.

NARRATOR 2
In a graveyard, a gravedigger gives to Hamlet a skull that he found; the skull of Yorick, the king’s jester.

HAMLET
Alas, poor Yorick. But soft—that is Laertes!

LAERTES
The devil take thy soul!

NARRATOR 1
They fight. Gertrude and Claudius pull them apart. King Claudius had a better plan. Since Laertes was known as an excellent sword fighter, he suggests that Laertes challenge Hamlet to a duel. Laertes adds to the plan by poisoning the tip of his sword.

NARRATOR 2
That night at the castle, during the duel, the king carefully sets out cups of wine, one of which he has poisoned for Hamlet. But, by accident, Gertrude grabs the poisoned cup.

CLAUDIUS
Gertrude, do not drink!

GERTRUDE
I will, my lord.

NARRATOR 1
She drinks from the poisoned cup.

GERTRUDE
The drink, the drink! O, I am poisoned!

CLAUDIUS
Gertrude dies.

NARRATOR 1
Hamlet, stabs Laertes.

NARRATOR 2
Laertes stabs Hamlet, mortally wounding him. Laertes dies. Hamlet stabs Claudius. Claudius dies. Hamlet collapses and with his dying breath says:

HAMLET
The rest is silence.

NARRATOR 1
Hamlet dies.
# TAKE-HOME RAFT ACTIVITY FOR *HAMLET*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamlet</td>
<td>The People of Denmark</td>
<td>5 tweets in a twitter feed</td>
<td>His father’s death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>Jury</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Hamlet refusing her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudius</td>
<td>Children of Denmark</td>
<td>Newspaper Story</td>
<td>His reaction to the play within the play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertrude</td>
<td>Her closest friends</td>
<td>Comic Book</td>
<td>The killing of Polonius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laertes</td>
<td>Students from a classroom today</td>
<td>Diary Entry</td>
<td>Ophelia's death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horatio</td>
<td>News Reporters</td>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>The marriage of Gertrude and Claudius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ghost</td>
<td>Mourners at a funeral</td>
<td>Eulogy</td>
<td>The death of Hamlet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Choose one thing from each column.
2. Apply the four choices to create your writing assignment.
3. Think of a creative way to present this to the class.
4. Present your RAFT to the class.

**Note to teachers:** This activity can also be done in class or with groups. One alternative approach is to write each selection on a card and have the students choose a card from each column.
SHAKESPEARE IN THE CLASSROOM

Over the past 400 years, a number of artists have tried to capture the power and emotion of Shakespeare’s works and have sketched, painted, and sculpted scenes from many of them. Re-create a scene from *Hamlet* by drawing, creating a collage, or using any medium you choose. How will you do it? Will you make it abstract or stylized, as in the production, or will you try something more realistic?

Create your own music mix for the play. What other sounds can you incorporate? Music in Shakespeare’s plays can not only create a particular mood or emotion, it can also help us to connect the play to our own world. What kind of music could you use (or create) to fit the play into a contemporary context?

Do It Yourself Adaptation. *Hamlet* has been adapted into many different settings and stories over the years. How would you take the story and adapt it for an audience of your friends? Create a new scenario for Hamlet and the Royals. How does your story end?
Hamlet is the most studied, most performed and most adapted of Shakespeare’s plays by far, possibly of any play ever. There are many explanations for the centuries of popularity, but in the end it comes down to the fact that Shakespeare managed to somehow pack all the ambiguity, complexity, and messiness of real life into a story, without losing the narrative structure and focus a story requires. The play deals in grand, universal themes: coping with loss and betrayal, the need to know the truth, the complexity of human desire, the parent-child relationship — and it examines those themes in human sized form.
STUDENT QUESTIONS

Use this space to write down questions you might have about any aspect of Hamlet. Write general questions or questions meant specifically for certain cast members and/or the director.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5.
CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Books

• *Teaching Shakespeare*, by Rex Gibson
• *Shakespeare Set Free*, ed. by Peggy O’Brien, Folger Library (several books, each dealing with 3 plays)
• *Teaching Shakespeare Through Performance*, ed. by Milla Cozart Riggio
• *Shakespeare in the Classroom*, by Susan Leach
• *Shakespeare: To Teach or Not to Teach*, by Cass Foster and Lynn G. Johnson
• *Shaking Hands with Shakespeare*, by Allison Wedell Schumacher

Websites

• For teacher lesson plans, The Folger Library: [www.folger.edu](http://www.folger.edu)
• For play synopses and some interpretations, The Royal Shakespeare Company: [www.rsc.org.uk](http://www.rsc.org.uk)
• For fantastic classroom texts, The Cambridge Shakespeare Series: [www.cambridge.org/uk/education/secondary/english/shakespeare/cambridgeschoolshakespeare/rexgibson.htm](http://www.cambridge.org/uk/education/secondary/english/shakespeare/cambridgeschoolshakespeare/rexgibson.htm)
• For an all-around great site that will give you links to lots of helpful sites including the MIT and other online copies of texts, festivals, libraries, theatres, etc.: [http://www.interleaves.org/~rteeter/shakespeare.html](http://www.interleaves.org/~rteeter/shakespeare.html)
• For some lesson plans, (under “study materials”) The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: [www.shakespeare.org.uk](http://www.shakespeare.org.uk)
• For general information and a great listing of additional web resources, The Colorado Shakespeare Festival: [http://www.coloradoshakes.org/education/resources.cfm#guides](http://www.coloradoshakes.org/education/resources.cfm#guides)
STUDY GUIDE SOURCES

www.shmoop.com
www.folger.edu
www.shakespearesglobe.com
www.rsc.org.uk
www.londontheatredirect.com
www.shakespearestime.wikispaces.com
www.telegraph.co.uk
www.northernstarart.com
www.eranthyaenoire.deviantart.com
www.stageraw.com
www.litcharts.com
www.classicstage.org
www.americanshakespearecenter.com