

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

HAMILET

Study Guide

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Co-directed by
Xerron Mingo and
David Orace Kelly



NEW STAGE
Theatre

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1100 Carlisle
Jackson, Mississippi 39202

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S
HAMLET

Grief can play tricks on the mind, even conjure ghosts. But when Hamlet's dead father appears to him one night, he signals murder, not madness. Hamlet's mother has married his uncle, and at a less than decent interval too. As he pulls at the threads of his not-so-happy new family, Hamlet unravels a web of deceit and immorality that leads to the ultimate crisis of conscience.

Hamlet45 based on William Shakespeare's Hamlet, Prince of Denmark
Adapted by David Orace Kelly



Suited for high school audiences.

Audience Etiquette



For many of your students, *William Shakespeare's Hamlet* may be their first theatre experience. It may be helpful to discuss with them the expected behavior of an audience. New Stage asks that prior to the performance, students are made aware of the following:

- Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers and chaperones.
- Be sure to go to the bathroom before the performance begins. It is hard to leave once the performance begins.
- Make yourself comfortable while keeping movement to a minimum.
- Please do not stand up, walk around or put your feet on the seat in front of you.
- Absolutely no gum chewing, eating or drinking in the theatre.

Noise

Live theatre means live actors who can hear not only what is happening on the stage, but in the audience as well. While laughter and applause at appropriate time are appreciated by the actors, excessive noise and talking is not. Even whispering voices can be distracting to the actors and others in the audience.

- Do not talk during the performance.
- Cell phones are prohibited in the theatre. If you have one turn it off and put it away and do not bring it out during the performance.

Applause

Applause is used to acknowledge the performers and to voice appreciation or approval. Traditionally, applause comes before intermission and during curtain call which happens at the end of a performance when the cast returns to the stage for bows.

The Cast of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*

Associate Artists 2025-2026



Jacob Heuer (**Laertes/ Player/ Rosencrantz/ Bernardo**) graduated from the University of Mississippi with a BFA in acting for the stage and screen. In college, he starred in several UM Theatre productions, including performing in *Little Shop of Horrors* (Mr. Mushnik), *Into the Woods* (The Baker), *Polaroid Stories* (G/Zeus), *Legally Blonde* (Mr. Callahan), *Boeing Boeing* (Robert), and *Little Women the Musical* (Mr. Laurence). In the summer seasons of 2023 and 2024, he performed professionally in *Oklahoma!* (Ali Hakim) and in *The Music Man* (Oliver Hix) at the Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts. Jacob has spent the last year working as an acting intern at the Florida Repertory Theatre in Fort Myers, Florida, and is looking forward to working with a new group of artists at New Stage Theatre.



Keith Allen Davis, Jr. (**Hamlet**) is an actor, writer, musician, and director from Meridian, MS. He recently received his Bachelor of Arts in theatre arts at Alabama State University. During his time at ASU, he has worked on productions such as *Dreamgirls*, *The Wiz, Tracks, Slammin II*, and *Blues for An Alabama Sky*. He has also written for and co-directed Montgomery, Alabama's performance for the worldwide festival of *The Walk* (Little Amal) in 2023. Since graduating, he was cast as Tim Allgood in *Noises Off* at New Stage Theatre. He hopes to continue to use all the tools he has acquired from Alabama State to propel him successfully into his professional career.



Ashlyn Pinkerton (**Ophelia/ Francisco/ Gertrude/ Guildenstern**) is a 2024 Belhaven University graduate with a B.A. in theatre performance. She was born and raised in Brandon, Mississippi. Her previous performance roles include *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* (Dorothea) and *Suite Surrender* (Murphy) at Belhaven University. She made her directing debut at Belhaven with her spaghetti western adaptation of *The Marriage Proposal* by Anton Chekhov. Pinkerton is pursuing a career in film acting and directing. She is thrilled to be a part of New Stage's team.



Cameron Vipperman (**Horatio/ Polonius**) is excited to continue her journey of lifelong learning, creativity, and empathy-building with New Stage Theatre. Originally from Columbia, S.C., she is a graduate of Winthrop University's honors program with a Bachelor of Arts in theatre, concentrating in musical theatre and minoring in education. Some of her favorite performances include *Pippin* (Catherine), *The Wizard of Oz* (Dorothy), *Sweeney Todd* (Johanna), and *Romeo and Juliet* (Montague). She has performed professionally as a Resident Chorus Member in three seasons with Opera Carolina. Some of her long-time passions are choral music, piano, musical theatre, history, songwriting, playwriting, summer camp, reading, and drinking coffee on porches. Some of her newer interests are Shakespeare, theatre for youth, vocal pedagogy, and weightlifting. She is so grateful to get to do what she loves as a profession. Micah 6:8



Tatiana Grace (**Claudius/ Marcellus/ Grave Digger**) is thrilled to be a part of the team at New Stage Theatre! Originating from Georgia, she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in theatre performance at Columbus State University in Columbus, GA. Her favorite past productions include *Three Little Birds* (Cedella), *Into the Woods* (Jack's Mother), and *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill* (Billie Holiday). She would like to thank her friends, family, and professors who have helped and supported her along the way.

Plot Summary

of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*

In the centuries since this renowned work by the legendary William Shakespeare was written, it has often been regarded by critics, scholars, and theater professionals alike as one of the greatest plays ever written. Praised and studied for its psychological accuracy and complexity, the essential story is simple, if perhaps excessively violent - a young man, urged to revenge the murder of his father, delays taking action. Several other deaths result, and the young man loses his own life in a battle with another more active, determined and vengeful young man. It is the play's contemplation and portrayal of the leading character's indecisive state of mind, combined with other thematic considerations relating to human corruptibility and the transitory nature of physical life that give the play its timeless greatness.



Engraving From 1876 Of Hamlet, Horatio, The Grave-Digger And The Skull Of Yorick.

The play is set in Elsinore Castle, the home of the royal family of Denmark. One night at midnight, as one shift of watchmen is replaced by another, a soldier named Horatio learns of the recurring appearance of a Ghost, believed to be that of the recently deceased King of Denmark, the father of Prince Hamlet. As the doubtful Horatio watches and waits, the Ghost appears. Horatio resolves to bring Hamlet, a good friend, to see the Ghost.

Soon afterward, the new king (Claudius, brother to the previous king) and his queen Gertrude (wife of the previous king, newly married to Claudius) hold court. Claudius deals with a military and political threat from an ambitious prince from nearby Norway, gives permission for a young courtier (Laertes) to return to France, and questions Hamlet as to why he's still in mourning. Hamlet responds that he has a great deal to mourn, and Gertrude (Hamlet's mother) urges him to stay at court and not return to university. Hamlet agrees, and Claudius leads the court away.

Left alone, Hamlet speaks the first of his several soliloquies, revealing his frustration and anger with his mother's actions in marrying his father's brother so soon. His thoughts are interrupted by Horatio, who tells him of the appearance of the Ghost. Hamlet quickly resolves to watch for the Ghost himself and later actually witnesses its appearance, confirming that it is, in fact, the Ghost of his father. The Ghost reveals that he was murdered by Claudius and urges Hamlet to take revenge. Hamlet reluctantly agrees, and after the Ghost disappears, he tells Horatio that he might need to appear mad in order to accomplish his goals.

Hamlet's apparent madness brings discord into the court. His relationship with Ophelia, the daughter of interfering courtier Polonius and sister of Laertes, falls apart, partly because of the courtier's meddling and partly because of Ophelia's fear. Meanwhile, Claudius brings other friends of Hamlet's to court in order to find out the truth of his madness, but Hamlet immediately realizes why and how they came to be there. At the same time, Hamlet arranges for a play to be performed, which contains references to Claudius' acts of murder. When he sees the play, the troubled Claudius withdraws to

Plot Summary continued...

pray for forgiveness. Hamlet finds him and has an opportunity to take his revenge, but doesn't do so, speaking of his reluctance to give Claudius a blessed death (i.e., one that takes place while Claudius is seeking redemption).

Hamlet then confronts Gertrude with his disgust at her actions. During their confrontation, Hamlet seems to mistake the eavesdropping Polonius for a rat and kills him. He also has a vision of the Ghost, who reminds him of his purpose. Gertrude sees all this and concludes that Hamlet truly is mad. Upon hearing this, Claudius arranges for Hamlet's friends to take him to England, where he is to be executed. Hamlet, however, realizes what's going on, turns the tables on his friends, escapes, and returns to Denmark. There, he learns that Ophelia, driven mad by the abandonment of her lover and the death of her father, has killed herself. As he watches the returned Laertes mourn his sister, Hamlet is moved to confront him, and the two agree to resolve being genuine. Finally, there are the deaths of all three characters, which in each case are essentially tragic, the basically sound characters of all three becoming corrupted by circumstances out of their control and their lives physically, morally, and emotionally destroyed as the result of being caught up in that corruption.

Horatio

Horatio is a friend of Hamlet's from university, a soldier and something of a skeptic. He needs to see things and experience things before he believes in them, and in this he is a contrast and balance to Hamlet, whose imagination often runs away with him. Horatio is also stolidly loyal, remaining faithful to both his friend and his friend's mission even though both become increasingly difficult to understand and accept. Again, he is a contrast to Hamlet, whose loyalty to his father (i.e., the Ghost) and to his purposes weakens and eventually falls away. He is one of the few characters to live through the carnage of the play's second half, a circumstance suggesting that on some level the playwright is suggesting that the values embodied in Horatio - loyalty, patience, trust, consistency - are positive and enable the maintenance of both physical and moral survival of the often unexpectedly corruptions of this world.

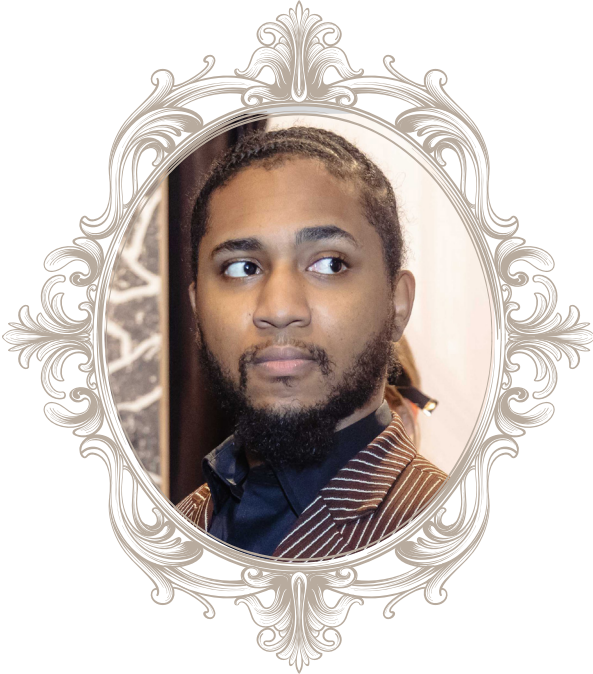
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are two courtiers, friends of Hamlet's from school, who, unlike Horatio, become as corrupt as those (Claudius and Gertrude) who manipulate them. They are flatterers and manipulators, not particularly clever, and essentially evocative of the suggestion that manipulators like Claudius, and like Hamlet becomes, will stop at nothing in order to achieve their goals and ends.

The Players

Brought to court by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the Players are traveling actors, going from place to place and presenting different performances at each one. They are utilized by Hamlet as a tool for triggering revelations from Claudius about his involvement in the death of the previous king. Scholarship and research have suggested that Shakespeare based the Players on a troupe of similarly itinerant actors with which he was involved in the early stages of his career. The Gravediggers The diggers of Ophelia's grave serve as comic relief, their black humor and jokes about death serving to both lighten the increasingly oppressive emotional and moral atmosphere of the play and to raise the issues Hamlet is about to encounter in a lighter, more engaging way. The wit and banter of the Second Gravedigger fits well with what the narrative has shown to be Hamlet's style of conversation, with the conversation between the two eventually making the thematically relevant point that death is essentially the great leveler. In other words, once death comes, all souls and bodies are exactly the same.

Characters in *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*



HAMLET

Hamlet is the young prince of Denmark, known for his deep thoughts and philosophical nature. He is thoughtful and often questions the world around him, struggling with complex emotions. Hamlet has a strong sense of morality but is torn between action and inaction. He is also deeply affected by his family dynamics and the changes in his kingdom. Throughout the story, Hamlet grapples with his inner conflicts and the pressures of his royal responsibilities.

BERNARDO

Bernardo, a guard at Elsinore, is one of the first to sense something is wrong at the castle. His actions set the tone for the play's mysterious atmosphere and introduce themes of uncertainty and the supernatural.

CLAUDIUS

Claudius is the newly crowned king of Denmark. He is the brother of the late King Hamlet and marries his brother's widow, Queen Gertrude. Claudius is ambitious and political, eager to maintain his power and control over the throne. Throughout the play, he shows a mix of charm and cunning, while also revealing a more morally complex side. His leadership and personal choices are central to the unfolding events of the drama.

LAERTES

Laertes is the son of Polonius and the brother of Ophelia. He is passionate and deeply values duty, especially when it comes to family. Throughout the play, Laertes is driven by a strong sense of honor and loyalty. His actions are often influenced by intense emotions, particularly when it comes to protecting his loved ones. Laertes' character explores themes of revenge, honor, and the impact of impulsive decisions.

ROSENCRANTZ

Rosencrantz, Hamlet's childhood friend, is summoned by the king to spy on him. He is naive and easily manipulated.

Characters continued...

THE FIRST PLAYER

The First Player is a skilled actor who helps Hamlet stage The Murder of Gonzago to test King Claudius's guilt. Though a minor character, he highlights themes of performance and the blurred line between reality and illusion.

HORATIO

Horatio is a noble born scholar and a loyal and intelligent friend to Prince Hamlet, whom he has known for most of their lives. They went to school together, played sports together, and attended social events together throughout their childhood and adolescence. Currently, Horatio attends school in Wittenberg alongside Prince Hamlet. As a lifelong friend and intellectual, he is trusted to relay important and sensitive news to the Prince. Horatio has a strong moral compass.



POLONIUS

Polonius is a trusted advisor to King Claudius of Denmark a position that gives him considerable influence at court. He also has two children, Laertes and Ophelia, the latter of which has been raised alongside Hamlet in order to eventually marry him. Polonius is very protective of his position and of his children's positions, and he schemes and spies to maintain the power that he has as Claudius's right-hand man.

KING HAMLET (DECEASED)

King Hamlet is the father of Hamlet. He was the former King of Denmark, known for his strong leadership and respect. Though he is deceased at the start of the play, his memory deeply affects Hamlet. His death leaves Hamlet grieving and searching for answers, with his legacy shaping the events of the play.

Characters continued...

THE GRAVEDIGGER

The Gravedigger is a witty character who works in the graveyard. He engages in playful banter, often using clever wordplay and dark humor. Despite his lowly occupation, he offers a grounded perspective on life and death. His casual approach to serious topics contrasts with the more intense emotions of the other characters. The Gravedigger's role, though brief, contributes to the play's exploration of mortality.

MARCELLUS

Marcellus is a loyal soldier in Denmark who witnesses the paranormal events at Elsinore. He supports Horatio and others in their efforts to uncover the mystery, contributing to the tension in the play.

FRANCISCO

Francisco serves as one of the guards at Elsinore Castle. He appears briefly in the opening scene, where he is relieved by Bernardo during his watch.

OPHELIA

Ophelia is the fragile and pure daughter of Polonius and sister of Laertes. She is hopelessly in love with Hamlet despite her Father and Brother's insistence to draw her away from him. Because of Ophelia's submissive and sensitive nature and the patriarchal hierarchy of the Kingdom, much of Ophelia's agency and action is imposed by the three men around her. After Hamlet dismisses Ophelia's passions, she falls into deep sadness and is driven mad. Ophelia is a virtuous and delicate character.

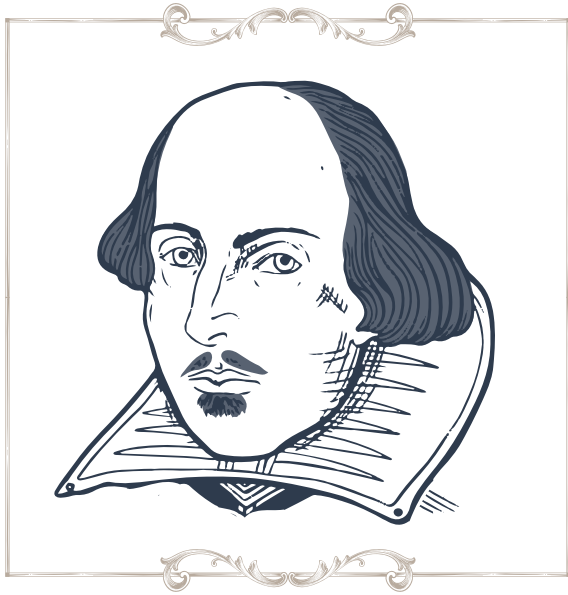
GERTRUDE

Gertrude is Hamlet's mother and the Queen of Denmark. Recently widowed after her husband, she is now the new wife of King Claudius, her late husband's brother. She is a mysterious character who keeps much of her intentions hidden from those around her, including Hamlet. Throughout the play, Gertrude strives to protect herself and keep the peace in her new family. She tries to prevent Hamlet from inciting violence towards his uncle. Gertrude is a very guarded and complicit character.

GUILDENSTERN

Guildenstern is an old friend of Hamlet who has been secretly hired by King Claudius. He works together with Rosencrantz to undermine Hamlet. He is a foolish character.





Who is William Shakespeare ?

William Shakespeare was a playwright and poet from the Renaissance era. Since there are not many records of his personal life from this time period, much about his life remains a mystery. His birth date is speculated to be April 23, 1564 near Stratford, England. He was the son of a leather maker and a local heiress. Shakespeare was one of eight children. Although, most of his siblings died in

childhood. There is not much known about his early education, but it is assumed that Shakespeare attended King's New School, in Stratford until he was about 14 years old.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

At 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. Hathaway was 26 years old and already pregnant at the time of their wedding with their daughter Susanna. Later, they would have twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet unfortunately died at 11 years old.

WRITINGS

Shakespeare is often regarded as the greatest writer who ever lived. He is noted for his clever use of language and prose within his plays. Scholars and students alike still study the meanings and language of his works. Some of his most famous works include Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, and Julius Caesar. His plays can be broken into three genres: comedy, tragedy, and history. During Shakespeare's time his plays were performed at the Globe Theater in London which is now known as Shakespeare's Globe. While we praise Shakespeare and his works today, he was not as highly adored and regarded when he was alive.

THE LOST YEARS

Shakespeare's career began sometime between the years 1585-1592 in London. His first published works were 'Venus and Adonis' (1593) and 'The Rape of Lucrece' (1594). It is unsure of what Shakespeare was doing at the time before he became popular. Some theories suggest he may have worked as a schoolteacher.

DEATH

Shakespeare is speculated to have died April 23, 1616. Though he died within a month of signing his will, he was described as being in perfect health before his death. He is buried in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford upon Avon.

Chronology of the Work of William Shakespeare

1590-91	The Two Gentlemen of Verona
	The Taming of the Shrew
1591	Henry VI Part II; Henry VI Part III
1592	Henry VI Part I (perhaps with Thomas Nashe)
	Titus Andronicus (perhaps with George Peele)
1592-93	Richard III; Venus and Adonis
1593-94	The Rape of Lucrece
1594	The Comedy of Errors
1594-95	Love's Labour's Lost
By 1595	King Edward III
	A Midsummer Night's Dream
1596	King John
1596-97	The Merchant of Venice; Henry IV Part I
1597-98	The Merry Wives of Windsor; Henry IV Part II
1598	Much Ado About Nothing
1598-99	Henry V
1599	Julius Caesar
1599-1600	As You Like It
1600-1601	Hamlet; Twelfth Night
By 1601	The Phoenix and Turtle
1602	Troilus and Cressida
1593-1603	The Sonnets
1603-04	A Lover's Complaint; Othello
1603	Measure for Measure
1604-05	All's Well that Ends Well
1605	Timon of Athens (with Thomas Middleton)
1605-06	King Lear
1606	Macbeth; (revised by Middleton) Antony and Cleopatra
1607	Pericles (with George Wilkins)
1608	Coriolanus
1609	The Winter's Tale
1610	Cymbeline
1611	The Tempest
1613	Henry VIII (with John Fletcher)
	Cardenio (with John Fletcher)
1613-14	The Two Noble Kinsmen (with John Fletcher)

The Era of English



Elizabeth I, 1533-1603

England has a history rich in politics, literature and art. The era of English history that saw the most influences in art and religion is the Elizabethan era, 1558 to 1603. After Queen Elizabeth's demise, James I succeeded her to the throne. His ascension united the crowns of England and Scotland, but he never achieved the great popularity with the people that Elizabeth had.

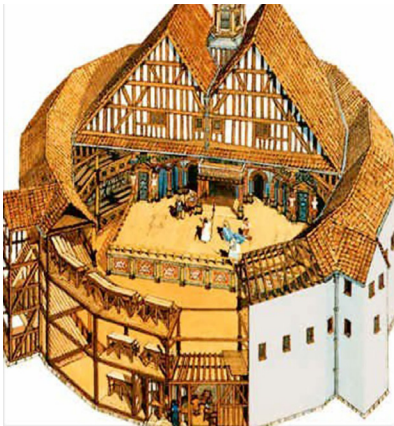
The climax of Elizabeth's reign occurred between 1588, with the defeat of the Spanish, and 1599, with the return of the Essex expedition from Ireland. The failure of the Irish expedition by the Earl of Essex led him to fall out of favor with Elizabeth. Because the queen was aging, her successor was unknown and there was mounting unrest due to the dawning of a new century. Many anxious and thoughtful Englishmen pinned their hopes upon Essex. After an abortive conspiracy against the queen, he was beheaded in 1601.

During Elizabeth's reign, there were two great movements in religion and art. Religious dissension plagued Europe. Before Elizabeth's reign, the English reformation broke politically with the Roman Catholic church, but did not embrace the theological doctrines of the Puritans. This reformation was formalized by Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, who is widely attributed with having broken with Catholicism because the Church

refused to give him a divorce from his first wife. During the short reigns of Henry's son, Edward VI and his oldest daughter, Mary, Catholics and Protestants were successively persecuted. The Queen Mary led a brief revival of Catholicism in England. However, the ascension of Henry's younger daughter Elizabeth reaffirmed Protestantism as the national religion, and established the Anglican Compromise. Out of the religious controversy of the time came the King James version of the Bible, named for Elizabeth's successor, James I.

This period, also called the Renaissance, saw a rebirth of humanism, a consciousness of historic renewal, a revival of the classics and the fine arts, a confidence in the power of the mind, and a desire for embellishment of material surroundings. The people of Elizabeth's reign, particularly in London, believed in catering to the senses, celebrating in the most bacchanalian sense of the word, and denying themselves nothing. The artist most notably chronicling the sensibility of the Elizabethan age was poet and playwright, William Shakespeare. He had only to take a look at the world around himself to find a wealth of material.

Elizabethan History and “The Globe”



The Globe Theatre, exterior

In 1567, despite the religious turmoil and heavy censorship by varying churches and governments on literature, the first permanent construction of “The Theatre,” as it was originally known, was built by James Burbage in Shoreditch, just south of London. This theatre eventually came to be known as “The Globe” theatre, and is widely considered to be the home theatre for William Shakespeare. This development marked a continuum of growth in the world of theatre.

Greatly influenced by the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the history of theatre and the classics gained in popularity and across England there was a resurgence of all things theatrical. Due to the religious turmoil and strict censorship, theatres were being built just outside the jurisdiction of civil authorities, on what is known as the South Bank, across the Thames from London proper. The authorities frequently found the performances to be inappropriate and

outside the bounds of the law. However, the new location hardly kept the public from attending, and a new age of theatre began to develop across England.

In 1599, the Globe Theatre was built at Bankside using the timbers of “The Theatre” which had been demolished by its owners after the man who owned the property it stood on, refused to renew their lease. The Globe, the most famous of all Elizabethan playhouses, was an octagonal structure made of wood. The structure featured a large, open, roofless space, surrounded by galleries and the stage. The yard was open to the sky and lit by daylight for performances. The main stage was bare and backed by a wall which contained several doors, through which the actors made their entrances and exits. Above the façade, there was a projected roof supported by pillars. Finally, above this, at the back of the stage, there was a hut used to house machinery for raising and lowering, actors, set pieces, and props on to the stage.

The set of Shakespeare’s plays, and in fact, most plays produced at the Globe Theatre, would have been minimal. It was the words and actions of the actors that kindled the imagination. The stage floor did have trap doors that would have been utilized frequently, as well as a partial rail, behind which privileged spectators could sit. Looking down onto the stage, the galleries, which surrounded the yard on the three sides around the yard, had wooden stools and benches for audience members to sit on. For those patrons who didn’t have the money to buy a seat (2 pennies), there was the yard. For only 1 penny, a Londoner could stand in the yard to see the plays of William Shakespeare and many other fine Elizabethan writers. These patrons were referred to as “groundlings” and were frequently rowdy. The actors often interacted directly with the groundling audience, and today, despite the fact that you still have to stand, these are considered some of the best “seats” in the Globe Theatre. Incidentally, probably the worse seats were those in the balconies directly over the stage, called “lord’s rooms,” reserved for royalty and very wealthy patrons. These seats were designed for the special guests to be seen by the people, and not necessarily for them to see the performance. The Globe Theatre could probably seat approximately 3,000 people at one production! In the case of bad rain, a performance would have to be cancelled, but many productions went on while audience members stood and got wet. The Globe Theatre is considered to be the most famous of the Elizabethan theatres, and the standard. Other theatres would have probably varied in size and shape, however, mostly they stayed true to a similar design. The influence of the Globe Theatre is still seen in the development of theatres today.

Objects and Places in Hamlet

DENMARK

This small Scandinavian country is the kingdom in which the action of the play is set.

NORWAY

Another Scandinavian country, in actuality larger geographically and in the play, more powerful militarily. One of Claudius' intentions throughout the play is to maintain peace with Norway.

ENGLAND

England is presented by Claudius as an ally of Denmark - or, at least, as a country he believes will be an ally after he promises to assist them in case of an attack by Norway. England is also the country to which Claudius sends Hamlet to be executed.

THE CASTLE OF ELSINORE

Elsinore is the name of the castle in Denmark that houses the royal family (Claudius, Gertrude, Hamlet) and its court (including Polonius, Laertes, Ophelia and Osric). It is the setting for much of the play's action. The real life Elsinore Castle was the venue for a famous production of Hamlet starring Laurence Olivier as Hamlet and Vivien Leigh as Ophelia.

THE RAMPARTS

A rampart is another name for battlement, the walkway atop a castle wall linking towers. Two of the play's first three scenes take place on the ramparts of Elsinore, where first the night watchmen and eventually Hamlet catch sight of the Ghost of Hamlet's father.

WITTENBERG

Wittenberg is the name of the university that Hamlet, Horatio, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern all attend.

LETTERS

Various letters play important roles throughout the narrative. They include Hamlet's love letters to Ophelia (which she returns, signifying the end of their relationship, an action which, at least in the mind of Polonius, triggers Hamlet's madness). Then there are Claudius' letters to England, which

contain the request for the English authorities to execute Hamlet, letters that Hamlet intercepts, and Hamlet's substitutes for these letters. The substitutes request that England execute Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

THE SKULLS



During Hamlet's conversation with the Gravediggers, the latter pull several skulls out of the ground into which the bodies they used to belong to were buried. One of these skulls famously belongs to Yorick, a jester in the court of Hamlet's father when Hamlet was a child. The presence of the skulls, and the reactions/comments they trigger, can be seen as a manifestation of the narrative's thematic emphasis on the transitory nature of physical life.

WEAPONS AND POISONS

An important component of the narrative's continuous, and increasingly oppressive, atmosphere of violence is the regular presence (in the latter half, almost constant) of instruments of destruction - weapons, particularly swords, and poisons. The presence of these elements gives a strong sense of impending, inescapable death.

THE SOLILOQUY

A soliloquy is a form of dramatic narrative in which a character, alone onstage, speaks aloud his or her innermost thoughts. Shakespeare used this device frequently, and to great effect, particularly in "Hamlet", which contains four soliloquies for the title character and one major soliloquy for one of the secondary characters (Claudius, Act Three Scene Three). In terms of dramatic function,

Shakespeare's Language

Through the course of his thirty-seven plays, Shakespeare uses over 21,000 different words, giving him a larger vocabulary than any other writer (of English or any other language) in history. He drew not only from Elizabethan English, but also from foreign languages, and he invented quite a few words as well! The great number of words suggests the enormously nuanced variety of meanings which Shakespeare could employ in order to convey the very precise thought or action that he intended. He chose not just any word, but always the perfect word for the scene, and if no such word existed, he created his own.

Shakespeare's style is noted more for its variety than its consistency, for each of his characters speak in a unique style suited to their own character and mindset. To create this device, he used every rhetorical device at his disposal at the time, writing sometimes in blank verse, sometimes in rhyme, and sometimes in prose – fitting the language to the outlook of the character in the moment.

One quality of Shakespeare's language that is worth noting is its spontaneity of form. Unlike contemporary English, his language seems malleable, easy to mold around a concept, and adjustable to any character's expression. Because of this, his words always seem fresh, perfectly crafted around the ideas expressed. The language also changes to suit the particular character speaking. Kings and noblemen speak a language that is more formal, more rich in stylistic device, while younger and more common characters speak directly.

The English language itself was in a state of flux during the Elizabethan era. Many words had no fixed spellings, and there lacked a set of rules regarding grammar and syntax as we have today. In fact, linguistic uniformity was not even considered ideal at the time. Rather, the quality of one's individual speech was a measure of one's intellect, so those that were presumed to be the wisest and wittiest were those people most successful at inventing their own language.

The English language was also still primarily

a spoken language, and Shakespeare's words were meant to be heard out loud, rather than read. The richness and flexibility of his words particularly enhanced the authenticity of his characters. Often through words alone, after more than 400 years, Shakespeare's characters still seem to come to life as real people whom we often recognize as mirrors of ourselves.

It is common for students to claim that they are overwhelmed by the unfamiliarity of Shakespeare's language. It can certainly leave one awestruck with its beauty and vividness, however, no one should feel that it is beyond comprehension. Shakespeare's language is not so far removed from our modern language as many people believe. In fact, Shakespeare has had a tremendous influence on our everyday speech. For instance, he has been credited with originating words such as "assassination," "bump," "eventful," and "lonely." Additionally, it was Shakespeare who originally coined the phrases, "catch cold," "fair play," "disgraceful conduct," and "star-crossed lovers." Many students probably recognized phrases such as, "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears" or "Parting is such sweet sorrow." Many names of Shakespeare's characters have also become euphemisms for their primary characteristics. A young romantic is often referred to as a "Romeo," and a merciless moneylender may be called a "Shylock".

One way in which students can better understand Shakespeare is by understanding the structure of the language. Shakespeare wrote in both verse and prose, alternating the forms for various effects. He often chose *blank verse*, which basically means that each line consists of ten beats of non-rhyming words. In addition, most lines are written in *iambic pentameter*, which is the most common meter in English verse. It is a line ten syllables long which alternates five light and five heavy stresses. The following example comes from *The Merchant of Venice*:

In sooth/I know/not why/I am/so sad.
It wea/ries me;/you say/it wea/ries you...

Shakespeare's Language continued...

Iambic pentameter is easy to remember by memorizing this pattern:

de **dum** de **dum** de **dum** de **dum** de **dum**

Many scholars have argued that Shakespeare chose blank verse because it resembles normal speech patterns more closely than any other verse form. From an actor's point of view, the verse is both functional and informative. Verse is usually much easier to memorize than prose. It helps the actor with the phrasing of the line and is an economical way for an actor to express the thoughts of his character. Most importantly, the verse gives the actor a clue to the psychological and emotional state of his character. For example, the regular verse pattern is de dum de dum de dum de dum. Let us then look at a famous line from *Macbeth*:

Tomor/row and/tomor/row and/tomorrow

Notice how the heavy accents land on the word "and." This slows down the pace of the line and suggests the weariness of Macbeth's mental state. The line ends with an extra, unaccented syllable. In this particular case, the additional syllable gives a burdensome feel to the repeated word "tomorrow." This helps the actor feel the line as he is saying it. Shakespeare uses *iambic pentameter* as a basic form but often varies the stress patterns for dramatic effect.

In a similar way, Shakespeare will alternate verse and prose for a particular effect. About twenty-eight percent of the text of Shakespeare is in prose. Shakespeare's prose should not be thought of as an inferior use of language. In fact, his prose can be very beautiful and just as subtle as his verse.

The complementary use of verse and prose is only one way Shakespeare uses language to intensify his drama. Shakespeare uses a number of literary devices to develop characters, themes, and imagery. By knowing how to recognize various types of word play, students can better understand the text and develop a greater appreciation for Shakespeare's genius. As a start, it would be helpful for students to be able to recognize the use of onomatopoeia,

repetition, oxymora, and antithetical phrases.

Many students may already know that onomatopoeia is when the sound of a word suggests the image of the word. A good example of how understanding onomatopoeia can help students grasp the language in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when Lysander is throwing off Hermia's love:

Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;
You bead, you acorn.

The very sound of the words makes one think of a little and supremely annoying person. It is not even necessary to know the exact meaning of all the words to recognize that the lines are insults.

Shakespeare uses repetition to give structure to a scene and to show things that obsess the mind. For instance, in the famous "nunnery" scene of *Hamlet*, Hamlet tells Ophelia to go to a nunnery five times in the space of thirty-six lines. Although Hamlet is preoccupied with his inability to avenge his father's death and with the wrongs of others, his real intent, to convince Ophelia to leave the corrupted court, is made apparent by the repeated command.

Another potent example of the effectiveness of repetition can be found in *Othello*. Othello suspects that Desdemona has been having an affair with Cassio and believes that she has given him a treasured handkerchief. He is convinced that if she does not have the handkerchief, it is proof of her infidelity. The following exchange ensues:

Othello: Fetch me the handkerchief! My mind misgives.
Desdemona: Come, Come! You'll never meet a more sufficient man.
Othello: The handkerchief!
Desdemona: A man that all this time hath founded his good fortunes on your love, shar'd dangers with you.
Othello: The handkerchief!
Desdemona: In sooth you are to blame.
Othello: Away!



Shakespeare's Language continued...

Othello's repeated demand makes it clear that he desperately wants his suspicions disproved. Desdemona does not produce the handkerchief, Othello's jealousy and rage mount. Although Desdemona attempts to change the subject, Othello can think of nothing but the missing handkerchief.

While the use of repetition can reveal a mind obsessed, the use of an oxymoron may often be used to indicate a confused mind. An oxymoron is a rhetorical device in which two seemingly contradictory words are used together for effect.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet uses oxymora to express her torn heart when she learns that Romeo has killed Tybalt, her beloved cousin. She wails:

Beautiful Tybalt! Fiend Angelica!
Dove feather'd raven! Wolvish-ravens lamb!
Despised substance of divinest show!
Just opposite to what thou justly see'st.
A damned saint, and honorable villain!

At this particular moment, Juliet is torn between her love for her husband and her hatred for Tybalt's murderer, who are of course, the same person. Therefore, Romeo is "damned" because he is Tybalt's murderer and a "saint" because he is her beloved husband. The use of oxymora is a concise, yet vivid way of voicing Juliet's complex feelings.

Similar to an oxymoron is antithesis. Antithesis is the setting of word against word in order to contrast ideas by presenting their opposites. One of the most famous examples of the use of antithetical phrases is found in *Hamlet*. Hamlet has devised a scheme by which he can determine if his uncle killed his father. While he waits for the plan to unfold, he has time to consider another alternative by which all troubles can be ended.

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.

By opposing the idea "to be" with "not to be," Hamlet is asking himself if there is any advantage in death. This leads to the question whether it is more noble to "suffer" life, or "to take arms" against life, and end all his troubles. Death would not be a bad choice if "to die" were "to sleep." Hamlet eloquently questions life by using the antithetical phrases, and the meaning of the text becomes more clear once the antithetical phrases are located and recognized.

Through understanding Shakespeare's use of language, we can more heartily appreciate his imagery, use of dramatic irony, philosophical ideas, and even his humor. One of the beauties of Shakespeare's work is that there are no set rules, nor any single way of interpreting the text. As a consequence, each time we read a passage, there may be a new discovery!



Facts about *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*



First Performed:

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark is believed to have been first performed around 1600 or 1601 at the Globe Theatre in London, though the exact date is uncertain. It was likely one of the first major works performed by Shakespeare's acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

Length and Structure:

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark is Shakespeare's longest play, with a running time that can exceed four hours depending on the production.

The play is written in five acts and contains a mix of prose, verse, and soliloquies, with some sections of the play being particularly famous for their introspective and philosophical nature.

The Famous Soliloquy:

One of the most iconic moments in *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* is the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, which occurs in Act 3, Scene 1. This meditation on life, death, and existence is considered one of the most profound passages in English literature. The line has been quoted and referenced countless times over the centuries.

The Prince of Denmark:

The central character of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* is Prince Hamlet, the young son of the late King Hamlet of Denmark. Hamlet is deeply affected by his father's mysterious death and the subsequent hasty marriage of his mother, Gertrude, to his uncle, Claudius, who becomes the new king. The play explores Hamlet's internal conflict and quest for revenge.

Themes of Revenge:

A central theme of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* is revenge. Hamlet is driven by the need to avenge his father's murder, but his indecision and philosophical



Facts continued...

nature lead to delays and moral quandaries. This theme raises questions about justice, morality, and the consequences of violent retribution.

The “Play within a Play”:

In Act 3, Scene 2, Hamlet stages a play within the play, known as “The Mousetrap.” He has actors perform a scene that mirrors the suspected murder of his father by Claudius in order to gauge his uncle’s guilt. This metatheatrical device is an innovative way to explore the tension between appearance and reality in the play.



Ophelia's Tragic End:

Ophelia, Hamlet’s love interest, is a tragic figure in the play. She is torn between her loyalty to Hamlet and her obedience to her father, Polonius, and brother, Laertes. Her descent into madness and her eventual death by drowning in Act 4, Scene 7, is one of the most poignant moments in the play.

Influence on Literature and Popular Culture:

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark has had an enormous influence on literature, theater, and popular culture. The play has inspired numerous adaptations, reimaginings, and reinterpretations, from modern films and novels to stage productions. Characters from Hamlet—such as the ghost, the melancholy prince, and the scheming uncle—have appeared in various forms throughout history. The play’s language and themes continue to resonate with contemporary audiences.

The Role of Madness:

A key element of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* is the theme of madness. Hamlet himself feigns madness in order to investigate his father’s death and to delay action, but there is also an ambiguity about whether Hamlet’s madness is entirely an act. Ophelia’s madness, however, is depicted as tragic and genuine, highlighting the emotional and psychological toll of the court’s treachery.

Death Toll:

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark is one of Shakespeare’s bloodiest tragedies. By the end of the play, nearly every major character is dead, including Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, Ophelia, Polonius, Laertes, and others. This high body count reflects the tragic consequences of revenge and moral corruption.

The Elizabethan Era

and how it relates to Hamlet (1558-1603)



1563, A play being performed before the court of Queen Elizabeth I of England. (Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

TIME PERIOD: This era happened during Queen Elizabeth I's reign and is often called England's Golden Age.

CULTURE: The Renaissance was in full swing, focusing on art, learning, and new ideas. Shakespeare was part of this cultural boom, and his works reflect the ideas of the time, including humanism, individualism, and exploring the complexities of life.

SOCIETY: The social structure was like a pyramid: at the top was the queen and nobles, followed by the middle class, and

at the bottom were peasants. In *Hamlet*, you can see this hierarchy in the way characters interact, especially between Hamlet (a prince) and commoners like the gravediggers.

RELIGION: After King Henry VIII's changes, England became strongly Protestant during this time. Religion plays a big role in *Hamlet*, especially in how Hamlet grapples with issues of morality, sin, and revenge, which reflect the period's religious tensions.

The Creative Team

behind *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*

XERRON X. MINGO (Education Director/ Co-Director) is a graduate of Florida A&M University. Born in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands and recently resided in New York City where he worked as a health & safety manager for productions on Apple TV and HGtv. He also worked as a testing secretary and production coordinator for television shows with LIONSGATE and Apple Music Reviews. For the past ten summers, Mingo has worked at Raquette Lake Camps teaching musical theatre to students from all across the world. He recently made a return to the stage and served as choreographer while playing the role of Fezziwig in *A Christmas Carol* at New Stage in 2021. He has worked professionally at a plethora of regional theatres in a handful of states. Some of his past credits include *Matilda* (Rudolpho/Choreographer), *Hell In High Water* (Cephus), *Sister Act* (TJ), *Shakespeare in Love* (Wabash/Frees), and Disney's *Beauty & The Beast* (Monsieur Dar'que). Moreover, *The Wiz* (The Lion) and *The Hot Mikado* (Pooh-Bah) at the GLOW Lyric Theatre in Greenville, S.C. He was in *Black Nativity* (Narrator) at Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, *The Great Society* at Asolo Rep, and *Hairspray* (Gilbert) at American Stage. Mingo continues to live in the Light and could not be more blessed to do so as he embarks on this new journey as education director at New Stage Theatre.

DAVID ORACE KELLY (Adapter/ Co-Director) is currently the Director of the Center for Performing Arts and the Arts Department Chair at Saint Andrew's Episcopal School in Jackson/Ridgeland, Mississippi. Teaching since 2004 in private and independent education programs, he has directed more than 50 fully staged productions with youth actors. Favorite productions include, *Diary of Anne Frank* and *Murder on the Orient Express* (Saint Andrew's Theatre), *Romeo and Juliet* (Paradigm Theatre) and *Stewart Little* (Magic Playhouse).

BETTY WONG (Education Consultant) begins her 18th season at New Stage. She continues to enjoy traveling to schools and towns throughout the state with the Professional Apprentice Company to provide live theatre experiences for students and adults of all ages. When not on the road, you can find her in the box office. She has also served for many years as a volunteer in other areas of the theatre. Her professional work experiences in education and her passion for live theatre have contributed to the growth and expansion of New Stage's Education Department. She has served as a consultant to school districts throughout the state of Mississippi. Wong has a B.S. in Educational Psychology from Mississippi State University, a M.Ed. from Delta State University, and recently won the 2019 Exemplary Arts Service Award from the Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education.

Artistic Director
Education Director/Director
Costume Designer
Sound Designer
Projections Designer
Scenic Designer
Scenic Painting
Props Designer
Education Consultant

Francine Thomas Reynolds
Xerron X Mingo
Carra Faith Spencer
Chris Roebuck
Alberto Meza
Richard Lawrence
Michael Montgomery
Jenna Kahley
Betty Wong

Shakespearean Insult Activity

Combine one word from each column below to have students generate Shakespearean insults. Students may roam the room, meeting other students and stopping to exchange insults. Or, perform duel style by having two students stand back-to-back, take an allotted number of steps, then turn and hurl their formulated insult. Onlooking students can vote on the best insulter, and the loser may feign a dramatic death.



**Thou reeky,
elf-skinned lout!**

= You smelly,
thick-skinned fool!



**Thou cockered, beef-witted
lewdster!**

= You spoiled, stupid,
and vulgar fool!

COLUMN 1

artless
bawdy
beslubbering
bootless
churlish
cockered
clouted
craven
currish
dankish
dissembling
droning
errant
fawning
fobbing
froward
frothy
gleeking
goatish
gorbellied
impertinent
infectious
jarring
loggerheaded
lumpish
mammering
mangled
mewling
paunchy
pribbling
puking
puny
qualling
rank
reeky
roguish
ruttish
saucy
spleeny
spongy
surly
tottering
unmuzzled
vain
venomed
villainous
warped
wayward
weedy
yeasty

COLUMN 2

base-court
bat-fowling
beef-witted
beetle-headed
boil-brained
clapper-clawed
clay-brained
common-kissing
crook-pated
dismal-dreaming
dizzy-eyed
doghearted
dread-bolted
earth-vexing
elf-skinned
fat-kidneyed
fen-sucked
flap-mouthed
fly-bitten
folly-fallen
fool-born
full-gorged
guts-gripping
half-faced
hasty-witted
hedge-born
hell-hated
idle-headed
ill-breeding
ill-nurtured
knotty-pated
milk-livered
motley-minded
onion-eyed
plume-plucked
pottle-deep
pox-marked
reeling-ripe
rough-hewn
rude-growing
rump-fed
shard-borne
sheep-biting
spur-galled
swag-bellied
tardy-gaited
tickle-brained
toad-spotted
unchin-snouted
weather-bitten

COLUMN 3

apple-john
baggage
barnacle
bladder
boar-pig
bugbear
bum-bailey
canker-blossom
clack-dish
clotpole
coxcomb
codpiece
death-token
dewberry
flap-dragon
flax-wench
flirt-gill
foot-licker
fustilarian
giglet
gudgeon
haggard
harpy
hedge-pig
horn-beast
hugger-mugger
joithead
lewdster
lout
maggot-pie
malt-worm
mammet
measle
minnow
miscreant
moldwarp
mumble-news
nut-hook
pigeon-egg
pignut
puttock
pumpion
ratsbane
scut
skainsmate
strumpet
varlot
vassal
whey-face
wagtail



Complete Learning Plans

OBJECTIVES: Some students have trouble focusing during a play. This exercise is intended to keep them involved on the characters, who is speaking, and what is being said. It adds an extra level of excitement to watching the production. In addition to following the story, they are now challenged to locate individual lines, identify what is going on in the scene that causes those lines to be said, and to find greater connection with the text as it comes to life.


MATERIALS NEEDED: Their assigned line from the choices on the following pages (or any others you might choose), a notebook/piece of paper, and a pencil.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN:

1. Assign each student a quote from the play. A list of suggested quotes has been provided on the following page(s).
- 2). Feel free to give students a general idea of the quote's placement within the play and its general meaning, but do not paraphrase it for them or pinpoint the quote's location.
3. Their challenge will be to listen to the play and find their quote used during the performance.
4. Once they have located their quote, their assignment is to write down who said it and who they said it to. Students should then write down why the character said that specific line and what they think it means.
5. Back in the classroom have each student say their quote out loud and remind their fellow students of the character, the scene, and the situation in the play from which their quote was taken.
4. If a student had difficulty locating their quote, perhaps a fellow student with a quote from the same monologue or scene can help them out. Use the master list on the following pages to find nearby quotes to jog their memories.

ASSESSMENT:

Your students should find a greater connection with the text and the characters. They should be able to identify their lines as they are spoken on stage and identify the characters who speak them. If they can go even further and identify what the character meant with the line and what the situation was you and they have done an excellent job!



Complete Learning Plans

designed for Grades 7th - 12th

OBJECTIVES: This exercise, similar to the last, is intended to challenge higher level students. In addition to locating their line, it will challenge them to connect with the characters on a personal level. This should help them to find meaning for themselves within the monologues. It should inspire them to view the play as a living thing they can connect to personally and introduce them to the fun of exploring the text.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Their assigned line from the choices on the following pages (or any others you might choose), a copy of the play, a notebook/piece of paper, and a pencil.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN:

1. As in the previous exercise, the students should be assigned a line or quote from the play. They must locate their line, take note of the character speaking the line, who they are saying it to, and what is going on in the play at that point.
2. After the performance (either as homework or back in the classroom) students should find their quote in the play itself. They should learn the monologue or scene from which the line was taken (10-14 lines suggested).
3. Have your student paraphrase the monologue (as in the "Tools for the Text" have them put the monologue in their own words- the more slang used the better).
4. Students should then bring in their monologue or scene, complete with paraphrase on a separate sheet. Have students remind their fellow students of the point in the play from which their piece is taken. Then they should perform their piece of the play.

ASSESSMENT:

Students should be able to identify the characters and scenes from the play. They should be able to identify the situations from which their line is taken and paraphrase the entire monologue. Students should be able to use the paraphrase to connect with the text they are speaking and perform their own interpretation of the monologue or scene. If they have connected with the work, their meaning and intentions should be clear in the performance.



Translating Lines

from *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, Written Activity

Look at the lines from Hamlet and try and translate what they may mean into modern english.

"To be, or not to be, that is the question."

from Hamlet, Act 3 Scene 1

"Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: A fellow of infinite jest."

from Hamlet, Act 5 Scene 1

**"O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!"**

from Hamlet, Act 1 Scene 2

"I must be cruel only to be kind; Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind."

from Hamlet, Act 3 Scene 4

"To thine own self be true."

from Polonius, Act 1 Scene 3

"The play's the thing..."

from Hamlet, Act 2 Scene 2

"The lady doth protest too much, methinks."

from Queen Gertrude, Act 3 Scene 2



**"To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou
canst not then be false to any man."**

from Polonius, Act 1 Scene 3

"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

from Hamlet, Act 2 Scene 2

"How all occasions do inform against me, and spur my dull revenge!"

from Hamlet, Act 4 Scene 4



Words and Phrases

from *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*

“Get thee to a Nunnery” Go to a convent and become a nun.

“A knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear” A clever or deceitful comment goes unnoticed by someone who isn’t paying attention or is too naive to understand it.

Calumny False and malicious accusations or slander; it’s when someone spreads lies about another person to damage their reputation.



“What, ho! Horatio” Hey, Horatio!

“Brevity is the soul of wit.” Being brief is the essence of cleverness.

“Something is rotten in the state of Denmark” There’s something seriously wrong in Denmark.

“Soft!” Wait!

“The rest is silence.” Everything else is quiet.

“With Mirth in funeral and dirge in marriage” - It’s strange to see joy at a funeral and sadness at a wedding.

“Fih upon’t, foh!” That’s disgusting!

Assay Treat to

Primal eldest curse upon’t The first and worst punishment for this.

Scourge The word “scourge” refers to something that causes great suffering or trouble, often used to describe a person or thing that brings pain or punishment. In a broader sense, it represents the struggles and hardships that people face.

Post-Show Discussion

1. What is your experience of danger and/or difficulty triggered by indecision? What have been the consequences of delaying action - have they been positive? Have they been negative? How do you view and/or practice the balance between effective thought, integrity and action/inaction?
2. What is your experience of the relationship between life and death? How do you view the experience of living as compared with the experience of dying? Do you agree with the Gravediggers that the human body is essentially disposable? Why or why not?
3. What is your experience of the tension between integrity and corruptibility? Have you seen and/or experienced an essentially good person's values eroded, perhaps even destroyed by desire? By mistaken priorities? How does one stay true to one's intention and integrity when surrounded by opportunities for, and/or invitations to, corruption through the fulfillment of ambition and desire?
4. Discuss the moral quality of Hamlet's two main conscious decisions - to not kill Claudius while at prayer and to have Rosencrantz and Guildenstern killed. Define first his reasons for making those decisions. Do you think he is justified in making them? Why or why not?
5. Discuss the concept of revenge. How universal a feeling is it to at least want to take revenge? What are the motivating feelings at its heart? Is it ever justified? Have you ever taken revenge? How did it feel before, during, and afterwards?
6. What do you think Gertrude knew? How involved was she, do you think, in the death of her first husband?
7. "Hamlet" as a play is famous for, among other things, its many soliloquies. What do you think is the relationship between this particular dramatic technique and the circumstances/personality of the central character?
8. Many of Hamlet's actions could be perceived as manifestations of insanity - his treatment of Ophelia, the killing of Polonius, the arrangements for the death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the leaping into Ophelia's grave. Many critics have argued, as the result of these actions, that Hamlet has, at least to some degree, become as mad as he at first pretends to be. Do you agree?



Evaluation Form for Students

Name _____ Grade _____
School _____

1. What was your overall reaction to the play?
2. What was your reaction to the acting?
3. What was your reaction to the scenery, costumes, etc. of the play?
4. What was your favorite part of the play?
5. Did you learn anything from this production? If so, what?
6. What other stories would you enjoy seeing staged by live actors?

.....

Send us your feedback!

Please send you feedback and thoughts to us! Return form to:

New Stage Theatre, ATTN: Education Director, 1100 Carlisle Street, Jackson, MS 39202



Evaluation Form for Teachers/Leaders

Name _____

School _____ Grade Level _____

1. What was your overall reaction to the play?
2. What was your reaction to the acting?
3. What was your reaction to the scenery, costumes, etc. of the play?
4. Please comment on the educational value of the play.
5. Do you feel this production was age appropriate for your students?
6. What titles or subjects would you like to see staged for student audiences?
6. Do you have other suggestions for future performances?



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Theatre Vocabulary

1. **Role-** the character(s) played by an actor.
2. **Props-** items held by actors such as a rake or a cake.
3. **Script-** the written words of a play the actors memorize their lines from.
4. **Climax-** the height and “changing point” of the story.
5. **Blocking-** the physical movement of actors. Where they stand and when they move.
6. **Costumes-** what the actors wear, including accessories such as a hat
7. **Playwright-** the author of the play.
8. **Improvisation-** acting without scripted lines. Similar to ad-libbing, meaning to make something up on the spot.
9. **Fourth Wall-** the imaginary division between the audience and the actors. When actors speak directly to the audience, it is called “breaking the fourth wall.”
10. **Dialogue-** the words spoken between 2 or more characters. A conversation.
11. **Monologue-** a series of lines spoken by one actor only. They may be speaking to another on stage character, or may be alone on stage.



About New Stage Theatre

Winner of the 2019 Governor Arts Award for Excellence in Theatre, located in the heart of Jackson.



The Theatre

New Stage Theatre is located in Jackson, Mississippi. New Stage Theatre was chartered as a nonprofit organization in 1965 and produced its initial season in the winter and spring of 1966. New Stage's first home was an adapted church at the corner of Gallatin and Hooker Streets. The theatre produced 13 seasons in the 150-seat church before moving to its present site in Belhaven in 1978.

Built in 1963 for the Jackson Little Theatre, the 12,000 square foot structure includes the 364-seat Meyer Crystal Auditorium, and a flexible, smaller performing space, the Jimmy Hewes Room. The theatre also owns the five other structures on the site, four of which are used for actors' housing and one for offices. In 1997, the theatre complex was designated as the Jane Reid Petty Theatre Center in recognition of the New Stage founder's contributions to the development of professional theatre in Mississippi.



The Mission

The mission of New Stage Theatre is to provide professional theatre of the highest quality for the people of Mississippi and the southeast. New Stage is committed to producing important contemporary works and classics, selected for their artistic merit and their power to illuminate the human condition. Challenging new works in development are included through the Eudora Welty New Play Series named for the distinguished writer who helped found New Stage. New in recent years is The Mississippi Plays Series.

More about New Stage Theatre

The theatre is dedicated to cultivating and educating a culturally diverse audience by gathering the finest available resources including playwrights, actors, directors, designers, technicians, administrators, trainees, and board members. Integral to the theatre's total effort, New Stage's Education Department maximizes its impact within our surrounding community, through artistic and technical apprenticeships, which mount touring programs facilitated by our Apprentice Company, aided with classroom materials for schools statewide, and developing curricula for and instructing youth classes.



Mainstage Productions

New Stage produces five plays each year in its subscription series, in addition to a holiday show, an annual student matinee, and a musical theatre summer camp featuring local youth. Mainstage productions range from master works to contemporary classics to new plays. All productions carry the mark of professional quality for which the theatre has long been recognized. Additionally, New Stage has a second season called Unframed, overseen by Artistic Director Francine Reynolds and facilitated by our Apprentice Company and Education staff, that features contemporary works. New plays are read and developed through the Eudora Welty New Plays Series and the Mississippi Plays Series.



The Staff

The theatre staff is comprised of seven full time administrative and artistic staff members, six full time production staff members, four acting apprentices, and three part time employees. All actors are paid and typically one to two AEA actors are hired per production.

Field Trips to New Stage

Attend our season productions during the school day for a discounted ticket price. Weekday performances are at 10 a.m. and admission includes a comprehensive study guide before the show and a post-show discussion with the company following the matinee.

GASLIGHT

by Steven Dietz
based on the original play by
Patrick Hamilton
October 24 & 30, 2024

MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET CHRISTMAS

by Colin Escott
December 10, 11, 17, & 18, 2024

The MOUNTAINTOP

by Katori Hall
February 6, 12, & 13, 2025

Little Women, The Broadway Musical

Book by Allan Knee
Music by Jason Howland
Lyrics by Mindi Dickstein
March 26 & 28, April 2 & 3, 2025

To reserve seats for your school or class call us at 601.948.3533 ext. 226 or email mtillman@newstagetheatre.com. Read more about each production at newstagetheatre.com!



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S
HAMLET