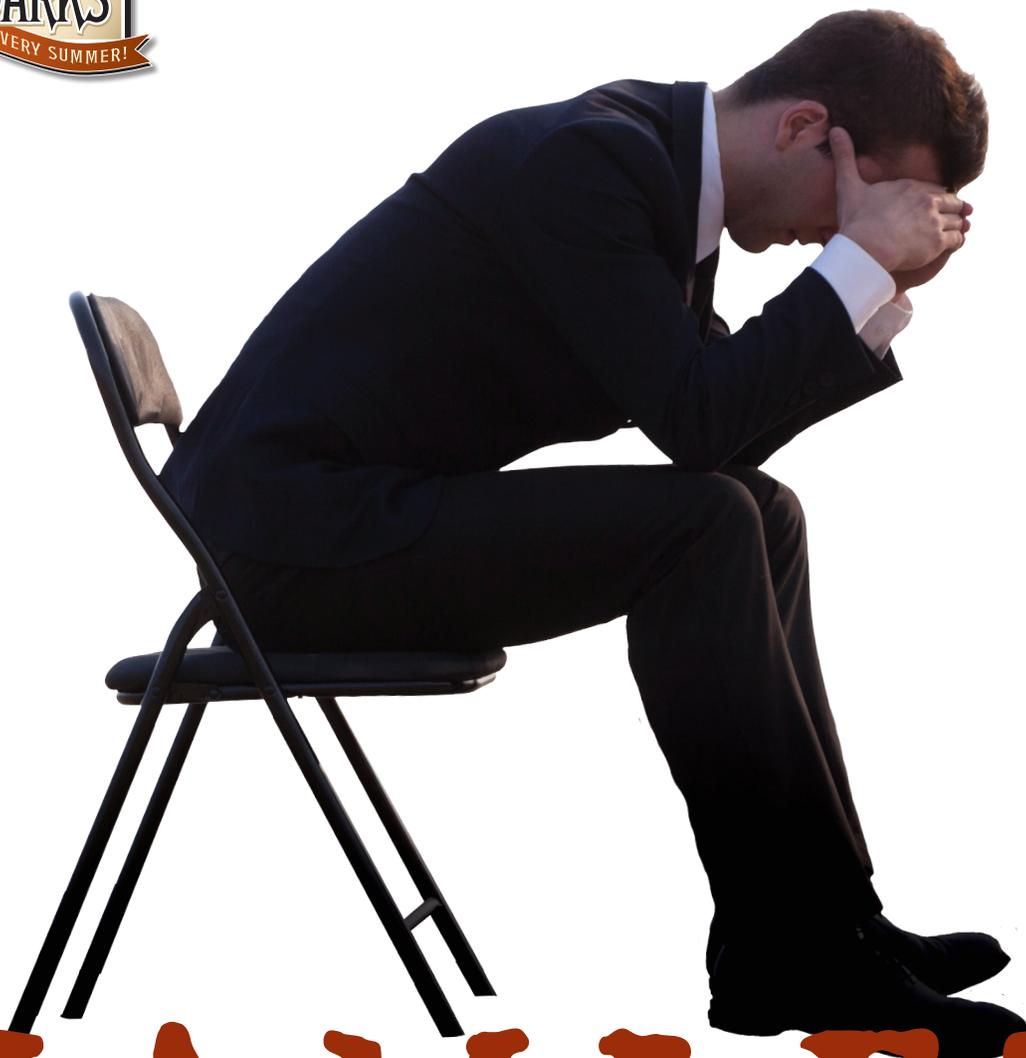




MONTANA SHAKESPEARE IN THE SCHOOLS,
AN EDUCATION PROGRAM OF SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARKS
PRESENTS



HAMLET

STUDY GUIDE 2016

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
PRESENTS



SHAKESPEARE
IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES



Montana Shakespeare in the Schools is an educational outreach program of Montana State University-Bozeman



SIDNEY E. FRANK
FOUNDATION



Montana Shakespeare in the Schools' production/program is part of Shakespeare in American Communities, a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:
www.shakespeareintheparks.org

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Shakespeare in the Schools 2015 cast members with a student at Conrad High School.

TEACHERS: PLAY WITH US AND WE'LL NOT FAIL YOU!

THANK YOU TO ALL TEACHERS! You are an integral part of our success. When you participate as an audience member and as a workshop participant, you help us make the very most of our visit! Last year, during the workshops, actor-teachers found that some teachers jumped in to every activity while others participated in the warm-up games and then chose to float around the room and offer suggestions. Either way, teacher participation made a difference. According to one actor-teacher, once teachers "committed fully... the students really were enthusiastic about [them] being a part of the workshop!" In this guide, we have included contextual information and discussion ideas connected to the workshops and the production. You can review these materials before and after our visit to complement and expand your students' experience with our play.

Thanks also for providing feedback during and after our visit and letting us know what you think!

WELCOME

“WE ARE SO THRILLED TO BE BRINGING THE WORDS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE to life for you and your students! There is no better way to access Shakespeare’s language and stories than through live performance; plays are, after all, meant to be seen and experienced rather than read off a page. Our goal with the Shakespeare in the Schools tour is to engage, inspire, and excite audiences in a variety of ways: through carefully curated workshops, contextual information and activities in this guide, and – most importantly – through the magic of live performance.

This is our first time producing *Hamlet* for the SIS tour, and I couldn’t be happier than I am having Bill Brown at the helm of this iconic play. His expert talent as a storyteller and his history with Montana Shakespeare in the Parks make him the ideal director for such a relevant and human story of how young people deal with tragedy and loss in an uncertain world. Between Bill’s direction, the skills of our professional actor-teachers, and the incredible design work our team has done on this show, I know you and your students are in for a once-in-a-lifetime theatrical experience. At MSIP, we pride ourselves on being able to share Shakespearean theatre of the highest caliber with our communities, and this fall is no different. *Hamlet* is perhaps Shakespeare’s most famous work, and it is an honor to share this timeless story with you.”

KEVIN ASSELIN
MSIP Executive Artistic Director



BILL BROWN
Director of
MSIP’s 2016
Shakespeare
in the Schools’
tour of *Hamlet*.

DIRECTOR’S NOTES: PARING DOWN THE PLAY

“THE TASK OF CUTTING A FOUR HOUR play down to 75 minutes is a frightening one.

I’ve directed many plays for Shakespeare in the Parks and Shakespeare in the Schools. I’m used to doing some editing. But this seemed particularly daunting. And nothing could be done, no casting, no design work, until we had a 75 minute version of this play.

Here’s what made the challenge so exciting. *Hamlet* is a young person’s play. Hamlet is young, his friends are young. The woman he loves is young. If I concentrated on this home-from-college group, on their shifting relationships with each other and with their families, a powerful story would emerge.

The production you will see focuses the action on a young man who has lost his father and watched his mother marry his uncle. His best friends (or are they?) leave school to be with him. The young woman he loves is dominated by a father and a brother who think they know what’s best for her. This young man, this Hamlet, is hurting. And when the ghost of his father comes to him, that pain turns to rage. He can no longer trust anyone. He has isolated himself against any comfort that his family and friends might offer. He has become obsessed with revenge.

We’re thrilled to be bringing this production to your school. *Hamlet* is a play that rarely shows up on school tours. But it should. Like *Romeo and Juliet*, this is a play about growing up.”

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

CHARACTERS



Ty Fanning
(Hamlet)



Joe Bianco
(Claudius)



Stephanie Chavara
(Gertrude)



Luke Massengill
(Polonius,
Player 1)



Brett Garrett
(Laertes,
Guildenstern,
Player King)



Tyler Meredith
(Ophelia)



Miles Duffey
(Horatio)



Faith Servant
(Rosencrantz,
Player Queen)

Hamlet's Family

KING HAMLET

King of Denmark, now deceased (seen/heard as a ghost)

CLAUDIUS

Brother to King Hamlet, crowned King of Denmark after his death; married to Gertrude

GERTRUDE

Former wife of King Hamlet; now married to Claudius; Hamlet's mother

HAMLET

Son of King Hamlet and Gertrude; nephew to Claudius; Prince of Denmark, first in line to the throne after Claudius; in love with Ophelia

Polonius' Family

POLONIUS

King Claudius' chief counselor; father to Laertes and Ophelia

LAERTES

Son of Polonius; older brother to Ophelia

OPHELIA

Daughter of Polonius; younger sister to Laertes; in love with Hamlet

School Friends

HORATIO

Best friend to Hamlet

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

School friends to Hamlet; attendants to King Claudius

Players

Traveling actors asked by Hamlet to perform a play reenacting his father's murder

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

HAMLET SYNOPSIS

Hamlet has been away from his family studying at boarding school but is called back to Elsinore Castle after the death of his father, King Hamlet. The play begins with a marriage celebration for the newly crowned **KING CLAUDIUS**, brother of the deceased king, and Hamlet's mother, **GERTRUDE**.

Hamlet's best friend, **HORATIO**, informs him that he has seen a ghost who looks like Hamlet's dead father. Hamlet goes to see for himself; **THE GHOST** tells his son that he has been murdered by Claudius and that Hamlet must seek revenge. Hamlet vows to "remember."

Meanwhile, **LAERTES** gains his father's permission to return to France, leaving his sister **OPHELIA** to take care of herself at Elsinore. **POLONIUS**, their father, forbids Ophelia to see Hamlet and she obeys.

Claudius sends for Hamlet's school friends, **ROSENCRANTZ** and **GUILDENSTERN**, and entreats them to spy on Hamlet in order to discover the cause of his strange behavior. Polonius thinks Hamlet's behavior is due to his frustration over his unrequited love for Ophelia. Polonius convinces Claudius to test his theory and sends Ophelia to meet Hamlet; he and Claudius hide to watch their exchange. Hamlet rejects Ophelia, insulting her and telling her to enter a convent rather than be loved by him or any man.

A TRAVELING TROUPE OF ACTORS arrive at the castle and Hamlet engages them to perform a play that will reenact the murder his ghostly father related to him. Hamlet hopes that Claudius will reveal his guilt while watching the performance.

And just at the point of the murder,
Claudius stops the play and angrily
leaves the room.

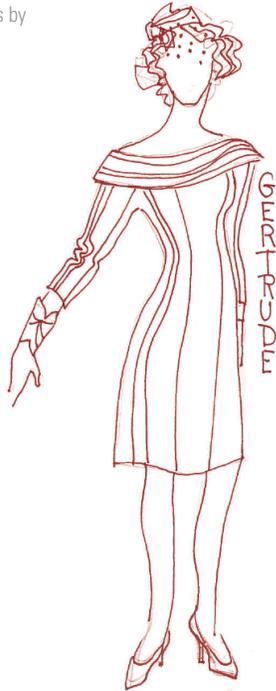
Unsettled now, Claudius plots to send Hamlet to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who have orders to kill Hamlet upon his arrival. He then heads to the chapel to pray; instead he finds that he can't tear his thoughts away from the murder he has committed. Hamlet has followed Claudius with the intent of exacting his revenge but decides that killing him while he's at prayer would only send his soul to heaven.

Hamlet meets with Gertrude in her rooms, unaware of the fact that Polonius is in hiding and listening to their conversation. Hamlet accuses his mother of abusing his father by marrying Claudius; Gertrude becomes frightened by his rage and calls out for help. Polonius calls out in answer and Hamlet, believing it is Claudius who has been eavesdropping, stabs him through a curtain. Upon discovering that he's killed Polonius and not Claudius, Hamlet turns on his mother but is stopped by the appearance of his father's ghost.



INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

Costume sketches by
Claudia Boddy



In the aftermath of Polonius's death, Hamlet is sent to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern while Laertes returns to Elsinore for his father's funeral. Laertes discovers his sister Ophelia consumed by grief over her father's death and Hamlet's rejection of her. Laertes and Claudius learn that Hamlet has foiled Claudius's plan and is returning soon. As they plot against him, Gertrude brings in the sad news that Ophelia has drowned herself in the river.

Returning to see the dead Ophelia in Laertes's arms, Hamlet cries out in grief. He and Laertes begin to fight but are forestalled by Gertrude; Hamlet issues a challenge to Laertes and they retreat to prepare for a fencing match. Unbeknownst to the others, Laertes and Claudius have

prepared a sharpened blade – rather than a blunted instrument as fencing rules dictate – and tipped it in poison; Claudius has poisoned a cup of wine as well.

The match ensues and Hamlet scores the first two points. Laertes scores the next point, scratching Hamlet with the fatal tip. Gertrude toasts her son, unknowingly drinking from the poisoned cup. Hamlet, angered that Laertes has broken the rules of fencing and drawn blood, knocks Laertes down. The swords fall and in the confusion Hamlet grabs the poisoned blade and

wounds Laertes. Gertrude falls, crying out that she has been poisoned. Laertes, realizing he has been stabbed by his own sword, reveals the plot to Hamlet, blaming Claudius. Hamlet then stabs Claudius with the poisoned sword and forces him to drink from the poisoned cup, killing him. As Hamlet lays dying he calls out to Horatio, telling his friend that he must live on to tell his story.



HAMLET IS SHAKESPEARE'S LONGEST PLAY, clocking in at over 30,500 words (that's longer than George Orwell's *Animal Farm* or John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*). To perform the play in its entirety could take up to five hours — and who has the time for that? Our first challenge every fall is to find a way to trim down one of Shakespeare's plays to fit our tour timeframe, without sacrificing story or theatricality.

Hamlet by Eugene Delacroix

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

SEEING THE PLAY: Before and After

REVIEW THE LIST OF CHARACTERS and read the synopsis included in this Study Guide, then consider these questions before and after you see the performance.

Before you view the performance, consider:

- What are the relationships within the two families?
- What do you wonder about the character of Hamlet, just knowing everything that happens in the play?
- How does Shakespeare use the “play within the play” in this story?
- As you watch the play, try to decide if this kind of story could happen in real life.

After you see the performance, consider:

- Do you think Hamlet did the right thing?
- Do you think Hamlet really loved Ophelia?
- Did the setting and costumes of the characters make sense to you?
- Why doesn't Hamlet act on what the Ghost says immediately?
- Do you think what Shakespeare did was a good way to end the story?
Is it a good way to end in real life?
- Do you think revenge is necessary or deserved in certain cases?
Why do you think that?
- What do you think of Gertrude?
- Does Ophelia go insane?
- What do you think *Hamlet* is really about?
- Did you recognize any parts of this story from your own life?
Do you know any people like these, or anyone that acts like this in a relationship?



Scenic Designer Tom Watson and actors Miles Duffey, Adam Thatcher, Chris Peltier, and Rebecca Hurd (L-R) during a post-show discussion for SIS 2015's *The Merchant of Venice*.

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS: SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

LITERARY DEVICES IN *HAMLET*

SHAKESPEARE WANTED HIS PLAYS TO CAPTURE THE IMAGINATION OF HIS AUDIENCE. And the way he did that was through language. Every play he wrote was concerned with the power of words to fuel the imagination, to raise questions and to evoke emotions.

The important thing for us to ask when reading or seeing Shakespeare is not so much 'what does it mean' but rather 'how might this be spoken and performed on stage'? There are no final answers, only choices and interpretations.

That said, we know that Shakespeare studied English and the rules of grammar and had a strong working knowledge of linguistic devices – which enabled him to turn his knowledge into powerful and moving plays!

Here are just a few examples of some literary devices he employed in *Hamlet*. Check your understanding and definitions of these devices with the examples we provided. Then see what you can find in the text yourself and listen for them when you attend the performance!

METAPHOR

"Denmark's a prison."

– Hamlet, I-ii

"Do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe?"

– Hamlet, III-ii

ANTITHESIS

"To be or not to be..."

– Hamlet, III-i

REPETITION

"O, that this too, too solid flesh
would melt..."

– Hamlet, I-ii

"O horrible, most horrible!"

– Ghost, I-iv

LISTS

"I am very proud, revengeful,
ambitious..."

– Hamlet, III-ii

"There's fennel for you,
and columbines.

There's rue for you...and here's some
for me... and daisy and violets..."

– Ophelia, IV-v

BOMBAST

"Forty thousand brothers could not
with all their quantity of love make
up my sum."

– Hamlet, V-ii





Sarah Bernhardt controversially played Hamlet in a prose adaptation of the play in 1899; her performance got rave reviews.

GLOSSARY / REFERENCES

DURING SHAKESPEARE'S TIME, THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE WAS FLUID AND EVER-CHANGING. Grammar, pronunciation, and punctuation were relaxed. A person's name could be spelled in different ways (as Shakespeare did himself with his own name). The first dictionary of English was published in 1604; *Hamlet* was written, we think, in 1601. Poets and playwrights felt free to experiment with language and to make up or adapt words to fit their needs. Audiences had to use context to discover the meaning of a new word or phrase. Listed here are some of the words and references in *Hamlet* that might seem unusual or unfamiliar for a modern audience. Pay attention during the play to find the linguistic devices Shakespeare uses with these words.

Adders (adder): a common European viper, a venomous snake.

"...whom I will trust as I will adders fanged." – *Hamlet*, III-iv

Apoplexed: paralyzed, benumbed.

"But sure that sense is apoplexed." – *Hamlet*, III-iv

Arras: tapestry.

"Be you and I behind an arras then." – *Polonius*, II-ii

Aught: anything.

"If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing and 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft." – *Horatio*, III-ii

Augury: omens; premonitions; divining or predicting the future.

"We defy augury." – *Hamlet*, V-ii

Bier: a frame or stand on which a corpse or coffin is laid before burial.

"They bore him barefaced on the bier..." – *Ophelia*, IV-v

Bodkin: dagger.

"...himself might his quietus make with a bare bodkin?" – *Hamlet*, III-i

Calumny: slander; defamation.

"...thou shalt not escape calumny; get thee to a nunnery." – *Hamlet*, III-i

Consummation: end; conclusion; completion.

"'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished." – *Hamlet*, III-i

Contumely: scorn; insult; abuse.

"For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely..." – *Hamlet*, III-i

Fain: gladly; willingly.

"I would fain prove so." – *Polonius*, II-ii

Foil: 1.) sword; rapier.

"We'll put on those shall praise your excellence with the foil." – *Claudius*, IV-v

2.) a person or thing that makes another seem better by contrast.

"I'll be your foil, Laertes; in mine ignorance your skill shall, like a star i' th' darkest night, stick fiery off indeed." – *Hamlet*, V-ii

Hebona: a poisonous plant (the identity and nature of the poison that Shakespeare references here has been a matter of speculation for centuries).

"...with juice of cursed hebona in a vial..." – *Ghost*, I-v

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS: SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE



In the Royal Shakespeare Company's recent production, Paapa Essiedu played the title role of Hamlet.

Glossary / References

Hercules: the Roman name for the Greek divine hero Heracles, who was the son of Zeus (or Jupiter, in Roman mythology). Hercules is famous for his strength and numerous far-reaching adventures.

"My father's brother, but no more like my father than I to Hercules." – Hamlet, I-ii

Hyperion: in Greek mythology, one of the twelve Titan children of Gaia (Earth) and Uranus (Sky or Heaven).

"So excellent a king, that was to this Hyperion to a satyr." – Hamlet, I-ii

Jove: another name for Jupiter, the god of sky and thunder and king of the gods in Roman mythology.

"See what grace was seated on this brow: Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself..."

– Hamlet, III-iv

Mars: in ancient Roman mythology, the god of war.

"...an eye like Mars, to threaten and command..." – Hamlet, III-iv

Nymph: in Greek and Latin mythology, a minor female nature deity; a beautiful or graceful young woman.

"Nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remembered." – Hamlet, III-ii

Orisons: prayers.

"Nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remembered." – Hamlet, III-ii

Promontory: a bluff, or part of a plateau, overlooking a lowland.

"...it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory." – Hamlet, II-ii

Providence: the foreseeing care and guidance of God or nature over the creatures of the earth; a manifestation of divine care or direction.

"There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow." – Hamlet, V-ii

Rub: an obstacle, impediment, or difficulty.

"Ay, there's the rub. For in that sleep of death what dreams may come..." – Hamlet, III-i

Satyr: one of a class of woodland deities, represented as part human, part horse, and sometimes part goat, and noted for riotousness and lasciviousness.

"So excellent a king, that was to this Hyperion to a satyr..." – Hamlet, I-ii

Tenders (tender): something offered as in payment.

"He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders of his affection to me." – Ophelia, I-iii

Tributary: ruler who pays tribute.

"As England was his faithful tributary..." – Hamlet, V-ii

Wittenberg: a town in Germany on the River Elbe, historically relevant for its close connection to Martin Luther and the dawn of the Protestant Reformation.

"I pray thee, stay with us. Go not to Wittenberg." – Gertrude, I-ii

Wonted: accustomed; usual.

"So shall I hope your virtues will bring him to his wonted way again..." – Gertrude, III-i

Woodcock: a type of game bird thought to be easily tricked or snared; simpleton.

"Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe." – Laertes, V-ii

GRIEF, LOSS, AND ISOLATION: INVESTIGATING TWO SCENES

SHAKESPEARE'S CHARACTERS, STORIES AND THEMES HAVE BEEN A RICH SOURCE OF MEANING and significance for audiences for over 400 years. Their relevance lies in the endless opportunities for interpretation and exploration that these human stories provide. The plays are full of people we are familiar with: sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, friends and enemies. We recognize and identify with the conflicts and with the emotions that come with such relationships.

In approaching Shakespeare's plays, it is important to remember that his language is *dramatic language*. Shakespeare's audiences came to *hear* the play as much as they came to see them. Theatres in Shakespeare's time did not have the modern benefits of contemporary lighting and special effects; rather, Shakespeare used words to paint the visual landscapes, to evoke the character's emotions, to suggest actions, and to reveal relationships.

The two scenes from *Hamlet* discussed here offer teachers and students an opportunity to work with Shakespeare's language. Please note that we are using text from our edited version of the play as you will see it. You are welcome to use the full text if you like. We encourage you to treat the scenes as scripts to be read aloud and performed, and not as literature that lives solely on the page. As Hamlet tells the players, "speak the speech...trippingly on the tongue." Interrogate the scenes and the themes they illuminate using three perspectives: First, identify and employ the linguistic devices, the rhythms, and the ways the text is constructed. Second, explore the imagery of the words to conjure up your imaginative interpretation of the visual scene as well as the actions within and between the characters. Finally, delve into the personal connections. How do the themes expressed in these scenes relate to ourselves and our world? What connections and insights can we discover?



David Tennant as Hamlet and Patrick Stewart as The King in a stage production of *Hamlet*.

GRIEF, LOSS, AND ISOLATION: INVESTIGATING TWO SCENES



Glenn Close as Queen Gertrude in 1990's *Hamlet*, starring Mel Gibson in the title role.

Hamlet's Grief and Loss: Act I, Scene ii

The play begins with the early stages of Hamlet's grief. He has been summoned home to find his father dead and his mother remarried. He is in the throes of shock, the inner and still raw sense of loss. Explore how the Queen, his mother, paints the picture of his grief for us while at the same time tries in vain to offer comfort and to understand why his grief is so particularly acute.

QUEEN

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not forever with thy vailèd lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET

Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN

If it be, Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET

"Seems," madam? Nay, it is. I know not "seems."
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,

Nor customary suits of solemn black.
But I have that within which passes show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

In this exchange, Shakespeare calls on the familiar metaphors and imagery often associated with grief and loss. "*Nighted color*," "*vailèd lids*," "*inky cloak*," "*customary suits of black*." Hamlet, for his part, though, finds his wound inexpressible: "*I have that within which passes show...*" He is suffering from the immediate consequence of grief which is the intense disruption of all that was familiar. He has lost his father and his entire way of life is forever changed. The King, for his part, tries to console him by offering a new 'father' and a fresh start.

KING

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father.
But you must know your father lost a father,
That father lost, lost his. But to persever
In this course—Why, 'tis unmanly grief!
It must not be. We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing woe and think of us
As of a father. And with no less love
Than that which dearest father bears his son
Do I impart toward you.

GRIEF, LOSS, AND ISOLATION: INVESTIGATING TWO SCENES

Shakespeare has Claudius begin his offer with graciousness and patience and yet, by the end, he forces the point. The phrases “It must not be” and “throw to earth” reveal more about the person giving the advice than the person receiving. The King needs for Hamlet to move on, and yet such immense grief knows no timetable. Once alone, Hamlet is able to voice out loud his ‘particular’ pain and loss.

HAMLET

O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew.
O God, God! How weary, stale, and flat
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. And not two months dead.
So great a king. So loving to my mother
That is to this—Oh, 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!),
She followed my poor father's body, she
(O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourned longer!), married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules.

Shakespeare begins with repetitions (“*this too, too solid flesh*”), metaphors (“*'Tis an unweeded garden*”), and bombast (“*Fie on 't, ah fie!*”) to reveal the extreme and intense emotions Hamlet feels. But then his thoughts turn quickly (“*that it should come to this*”) and we discover the nature and intensity of Hamlet's suffering: “*And not two months dead...*” As Hamlet struggles to assimilate the loss of his father, he must also struggle with the loss of his mother. And no sooner does Hamlet give voice to his grief than Shakespeare immediately complicates it further by introducing to Hamlet the idea that his father's ghost walks the earth.

HORATIO

Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Barnardo, on their watch,
In the dead waste and middle of the night,
Been thus encountered: a figure like your father,
Appears before them and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by, whilst they, distilled
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb and speak not to him.
And I with them the third night kept the watch,
Where, as they had said, the apparition comes.

HAMLET

But where was this?

HORATIO

My lord, upon the platform where we watch.

HAMLET

Did you not speak to it?

HORATIO

My lord, I did,
But answer made it none.

GRIEF, LOSS, AND ISOLATION: INVESTIGATING TWO SCENES

HAMLET

'Tis very strange.

HORATIO

It would have much amazed you.

HAMLET

Very like.

I will watch tonight.

Perchance 'twill walk again.

HORATIO

I warrant it will.

HAMLET

If it assume my noble father's person,

I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape

And bid me hold my peace. So fare you well.

Notice how Shakespeare's words paint a vivid visual picture ("*In the dead waste and middle of the night*") while at the same time instilling the mystery and dread that comes with witnessing the supernatural ("*whilst they, distilled / Almost to jelly with the act of fear, / Stand dumb and speak not to him*"). In this scene, Shakespeare also confirms the deep friendship between Horatio and Hamlet. Who but a good friend would relay such a sight? Who but a good friend would believe it to be true? Shakespeare ends the scene with a telling phrase: "*My father's spirit—! All is not well.*"

This one scene has set what will come to be the structure and the bond for the entire play. The extraordinary nature of what the Ghost says to Hamlet in Scene four freezes Hamlet's grief into an icy vow of remembrance and revenge. Shakespeare casts Hamlet into ever deepening isolation from all others in the play, which ultimately seals his final fate.



Ethan Hawke as Hamlet in 2000 film version directed by Michael Almereyda and also starring Bill Murray.

GRIEF, LOSS, AND ISOLATION: INVESTIGATING TWO SCENES



Laurence Olivier as Hamlet and Jean Simmons as Ophelia in 1948

Isolation and Rejection: Act III, Scene i

Having set him on the path of revelation and revenge, Shakespeare turns Hamlet's anger loose on the one person he loves and the one who most loves him: Ophelia. Shakespeare introduces Hamlet's love for her in Act I, Scene iii when Ophelia tells her father that Hamlet "*hath, my lord, of late made many tenders / Of his affection to me.*" Polonius responds that she must stay away from him: "*I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth / Have you so slander any moment leisure / As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.*" Hamlet is too far above her station to warrant any serious romantic pursuit. And yet, though Ophelia will obey her father, Shakespeare does not close the door entirely on the possibility.

By the time we reach Act III, Hamlet has gone too far in alienating those around him to reverse his direction. He is alone and in his most famous speech ("*To be or not to be*") wrestles with his emotions. Immediately after that moment, Shakespeare (through Polonius) directs Ophelia to enter the scene.

HAMLET

The fair Ophelia.—Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

OPHELIA

Good my lord,
How does your Honor for this many a day?

HAMLET

I humbly thank you, well.

OPHELIA

My lord, I have remembrances of yours
That I have longèd long to redeliver.
I pray you now receive them.

HAMLET

No, not I. I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA

My honored lord, you know right well you did,
And with them words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich. Their perfume lost,
Take these again, for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.

In this short exchange, Ophelia unwittingly contributes to Hamlet's sense of isolation and desperation. The politeness and formality of her speech ("*my lord*," "*your Honor*," "*My honored lord...*") disguises emotions she might feel. Instead, she is the obedient daughter and holds silent her heart's affections for Hamlet. Ophelia's polite rejection proves too much for him and his grief gives way to anger and rage.

GRIEF, LOSS, AND ISOLATION: INVESTIGATING TWO SCENES



Kenneth Branagh as Hamlet and Kate Winslet as Ophelia in the 1996 film.

HAMLET

Ha, ha, are you honest?

OPHELIA

My lord?

HAMLET

Are you fair?

OPHELIA

What means your Lordship?

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

HAMLET

Ay, truly, for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd. I did love you once.

OPHELIA

Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

At home, my lord.

HAMLET

Let the doors be shut upon him that he may play the fool nowhere but in 's own house. Farewell.

OPHELIA

O, help him, you sweet heavens!

HAMLET

If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, farewell.

The sheer meanness of Hamlet's reply, twisting Ophelia's beauty away from honesty and disavowing his love ("*I did love you once*"), takes our breath away. Ophelia holds on to her politeness while Shakespeare allows Hamlet's anger and grief to get the best of him. The fury of his words, unleashed in a torrent of inappropriate advice ("*Get thee to a nunnery*"), casts Ophelia to a fate she has done nothing to deserve. She calls out in despair "*O, help him, you sweet heavens!*" And Hamlet, having now rejected the one person he says he has loved, provides nothing but more of the same: "*If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.*" When Hamlet leaves, Ophelia is crestfallen.

GRIEF, LOSS, AND ISOLATION: INVESTIGATING TWO SCENES

OPHELIA

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of time and harsh;
That unmatched form and stature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy. O, woe is me
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

In this short scene, Shakespeare has not only erased any hope of a loving future for Hamlet but has also completely isolated Ophelia. Her brother is away, her father has refused to let her speak with Hamlet, and now Hamlet himself has rejected the love she thought they had. At this point in the play, the intricate and incredibly sad tragedy of Hamlet is set. There are no actions that will be commensurate with Hamlet's or Ophelia's grief. There is no recovery from their loss or their isolation. In the end, there is no other recourse left for Shakespeare's Hamlet but to plead with his best and only friend Horatio to continue living so that he might tell others this story, to remind listeners of the fragility of life and the deep pain of loneliness and sorrow.

HAMLET

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story. O, I die, Horatio!
The rest is silence. *Dies.*

HORATIO

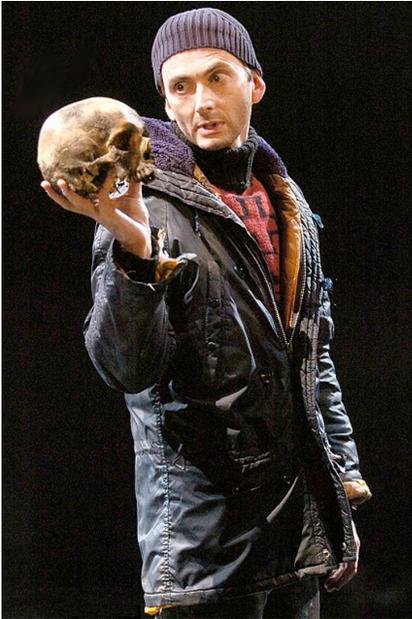
Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.



Hamlet's death as portrayed in the 1990 movie starring Mel Gibson.

LOSING THE NAME OF ACTION: WHAT WE SEE WHEN WE LOOK INTO THE MIRROR OF HAMLET

Written by Gretchen Minton, Ph.D.



Dr. Who actor David Tennant brings modern sensibility to Hamlet

SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET* IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR WORKS OF LITERATURE that the world has ever known. The play dominates Shakespeare's canon, just as the title character dominates the play. For 417 years audiences have enjoyed watching this introspective prince contemplating the "big questions" about life and death in soliloquies that allow access to his innermost thoughts. Emboldened by the intimate relationship Hamlet seems to share with his audience, each generation has found ways to see their own struggles reflected in those of this famous literary character. The iconic image of Hamlet holding Yorick's skull continues to resonate in popular culture, from Doctor Who to *Kylo Ren*. The face of Yorick remains unchanged, but the face of Hamlet adapts to each successive age.

When Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* it was understood as a story about revenge; like many other plays of its era, it explored the ethics of avenging a relative's death. As religion and politics changed in the coming centuries, however, others saw something different in Hamlet. The Romantics thought he was a sensitive and "delicate" prince who could not complete his task; Freud thought he suffered from unresolved feelings for his mother; Lawrence Olivier's *Hamlet* film voiced a popular interpretation of the Danish prince as "a man who could not make up his mind"; while later in the 20th century, Hamlet was seen as an embittered revolutionary.

From a 21st-century perspective, however, *Hamlet* is more likely to seem like a play about a man who doesn't know how to *act*. It is not indecision he feels, but an inability to negotiate competing claims that pull him in different directions. Hamlet's story is perfectly relatable to any young man's experience as he tries to figure out what it means to take on adult responsibilities. He must endure a strained dynamic with a parent and step-parent; the promise and disappointment of a relationship with his girlfriend; the unsatisfying companionship of friends who no longer seem to understand him; the mixed emotions that accompany the loss of a loved one.



Themes from Hamlet echo with Kylo Ren in *The Force Awakens*

LOSING THE NAME OF ACTION



Hamlet featured in *The Shakespeare Memorial* by Lord Ronald Gower. Bronze and stone. 1888. Bancroft Gardens, Stratford-upon-Avon.

Hamlet's confusion thus stems from the pressures associated with competing societal, familial, and personal obligations and desires. Like many other young people today, he feels caught in the midst of overwhelming systems that often leave one feeling powerless and depersonalized. To make matters worse, Elsinore is a place of ubiquitous surveillance; Claudius essentially runs a totalitarian state in which the subjects are not free. If this were a modern regime, all CCTV tapes, emails, social media would be reviewed for suspicious activity.

Not surprisingly, in such a state Hamlet feels paranoid, for he's unable to act or speak without being watched. Instead he retreats, immersing himself in literature and philosophy. There is something comforting in imagining himself as living in "a nutshell" rather than in the larger world. Rather than allowing others to fully access his pain and isolation, he distances them by acting funny or even insane.

Theatre itself is a refuge for Hamlet. He cannot be certain of his uncle's guilt until he watches his reaction to a similar plot being played out. Hamlet sees drama as a way of holding "the mirror up to nature," as if it could provide clear, absolute parallels between art and life. But "nature" is not certain either; it is constantly evolving, changing, creating systems of flux that cannot be predicted. The awareness of this instability is something which characterizes our own time period. Our lives, especially now, are in a constant state of revision or replay. We re-write ourselves all the

time, using whatever projections we can devise to externalize identity. Such avatars allow infinite persona—perhaps the only line of defense against the monolith.

Hamlet desires an existence in which authenticity can be reached—"that within which passes show." Yet despite the torrent of words he pours out, nothing seems sufficient for expressing what he actually feels, or who he actually is. Nearly every scene in the play shows how slippery language is, how impossible to pin down and frustratingly vague. Hamlet himself jokes about the insufficiency of "words, words, words," stubbornly resisting the scripts that others have written for him: the Ghost's injunction to "Revenge his foul and



Mel Gibson in 1990's *Hamlet*

LOSING THE NAME OF ACTION

most unnatural murder”; Claudius’ insistence that he is Hamlet’s “father”; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s childhood pranks that recall a lost time. Hamlet tries to write his own script, to control his own fate, but he never manages to overcome the feeling that he has limited free will. It is almost as if someone else has written the story of his life, and he is fated to play only that part (as in the film *Stranger than Fiction*). Even as he dies, Hamlet’s chief concern is that someone will report his story faithfully. “The rest is silence” for him, but not for other living and breathing narrators like Horatio.

But what story will Horatio tell, and what story do any of us tell about Hamlet? The performances, classes, discussions, books dedicated to *Hamlet* constitute millions of stories in their own right. They also attest to the impossibility of achieving the authentic. Even in Shakespeare’s time there were multiple texts of *Hamlet*, yet we cannot recover the original or authoritative one. Similarly, when Shakespeare in the Schools performs a shortened version of the play, much has been cut from the more complete scripts. Every act of cutting or addition, every utterance or performance, becomes part of a living community comprised of those who aren’t just regurgitating an antiquated story, but who are actively making *Hamlet* into something new. This is precisely what Shakespeare did: he took a story that everyone knew and made it something fresh and exciting that spoke to the audience in his own historical moment.

In her madness, Ophelia says “we know what we are, but know not what we may be.” In the past *Hamlet* meant something different from what it means in the 21st century. Shakespeare gave us a play that invites us to participate in its own retelling, and in the process we can see our own reflections and consider how our own actions might be suited to these words.



“The Drowning of Ophelia” by Sir John Everett Millais, 1851.

MONTANA SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARKS & MONTANA'S COMMON CORE STANDARDS



opi.mt.gov

Montana
Office of Public Instruction
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

FOR EVERY SHAKESPEARE IN THE SCHOOLS TOUR, MSIP education staff and guest artists create new, play-specific workshops that explore topics like dramatic language, relevant themes, theatrical production, and movement. Our workshops align with Montana Common Core Standards in reading, speaking/listening, language, and literacy. Listed here are some of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards addressed in this year's workshops.

- CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it
- CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text; summarize the key supporting details and ideas
- CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text
- CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in text
- CCRA.R.5 Analyze the structure of texts
- CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text
- CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats
- CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations
- CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats
- CCRA.SL.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric
- CCRA.SL.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks
- CCRA.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage



- CCRA.L.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts
- CCRA.L.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words using context clues
- CCRA.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in meaning

Friends of MSIP at a fundraising event for Shakespeare in the Schools.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

BORN

Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 in Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire, about 100 miles northwest of London. April 23, 2014 marked the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth! His parents were John and Mary Shakespeare. His father John was a whit-tawer, someone who made and worked with leather goods such as purses, belts, and gloves. William Shakespeare had seven brothers and sisters. He was the third son.

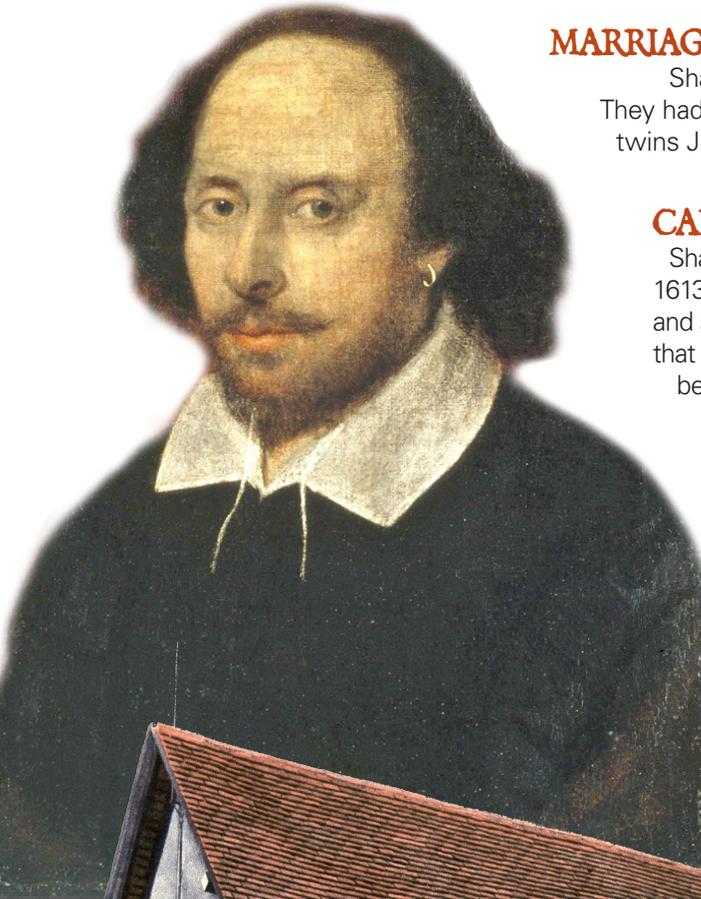
MARRIAGE and FAMILY

Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582. They had three children. Daughter Susanna was born in 1583, and twins Judith and Hamnet born two years later.

CAREER

Shakespeare produced most of his work between 1589 and 1613. He wrote 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and some other short verses. By the early 1590's, records indicate that Shakespeare was a managing partner with The Lord Chamberlain's Men, an acting company in London. After the crowning of King James in 1603, the company changed its name to The King's Men. By 1599, Shakespeare and his business partners built their own theatre on the bank of the South Thames in London. They called it The Globe. The Globe was destroyed by fire on June 29, 1613.

Scholars to this day are debating about when *Hamlet* was actually written, though most agree that it was between 1599-1602. Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, died in 1596 at the age of eleven and there are theories speculating that Shakespeare's grief over his son inspired the play *Hamlet*. However,



Shakespeare's home in Stratford upon Avon



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

there are so many legends and other literary precursors to the story of a vengeful prince that most scholars reject the Hamnet connection.

The earliest is an anonymous Scandinavian tale, Saga of Hrolf Kraki, in which the murdered king has two sons; there is also the Roman legend of Brutus, in which the main character plays the fool to avoid his father and brother's fate and eventually exact revenge. Another likely source for Shakespeare's inspiration is an earlier play — which some speculate was written by Shakespeare himself — called the *Ur-Hamlet*. Both plays feature a ghost, and the *Ur-Hamlet* may very well have been performed by Shakespeare's company, the Chamberlain's Men.

DEATH

Shakespeare is believed to have died on April 23, 1616, and was survived by his wife. 2016 marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and there were many events and celebrations planned throughout the world. In the U.S., the Folger is sponsoring a tour of Shakespeare's first folio. The document will visit each state in the union. In Montana, the First Folio was at the University of Montana May 9 – 31, 2016.

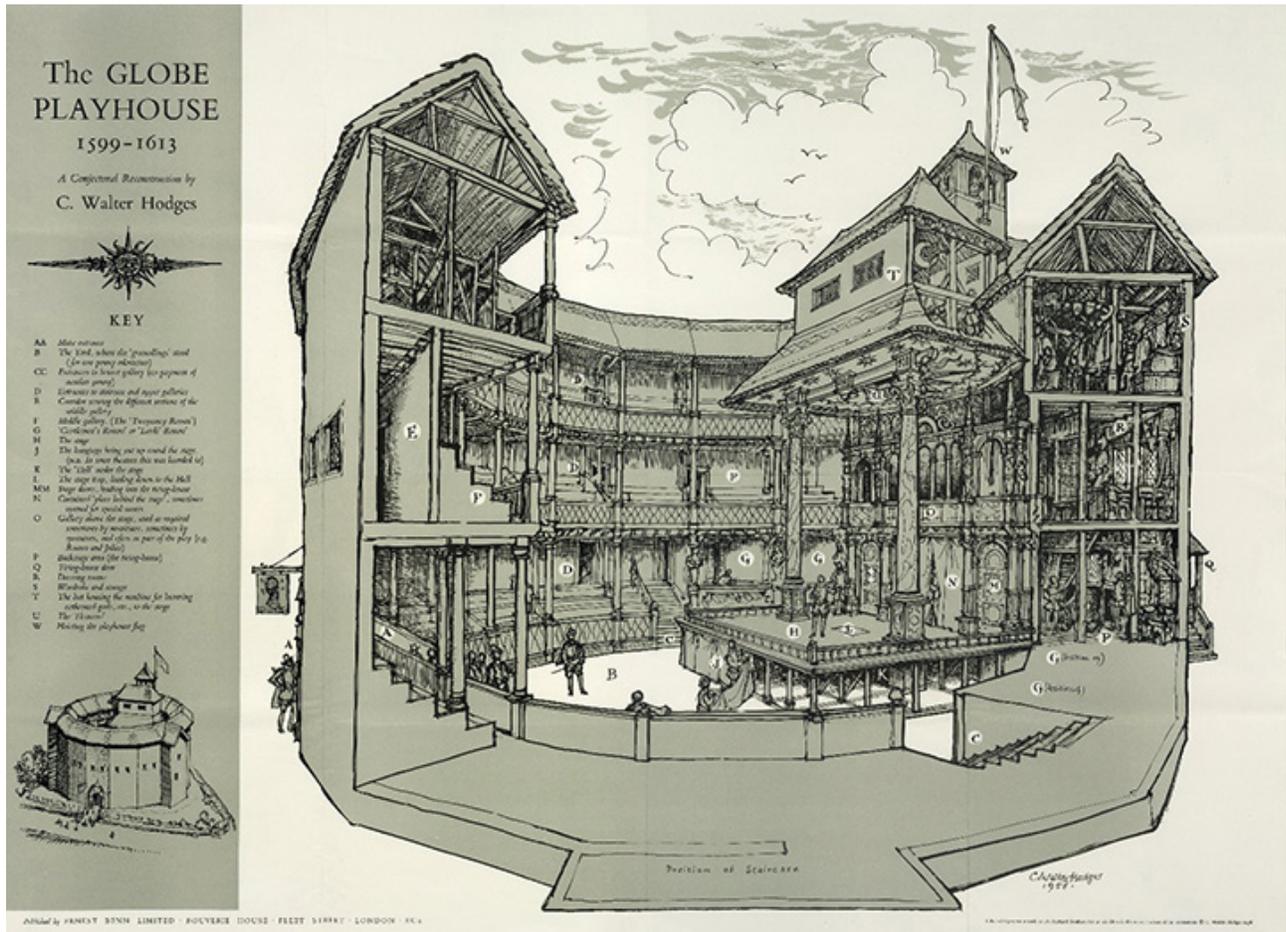


Diagram of Shakespeare's Globe Theater

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

THERE ARE SO MANY BOOKS AND JOURNALS DEVOTED TO SHAKESPEARE and in particular to *Hamlet* that it would be impossible to include them all here. We have used the Arden edition of *Hamlet*. You are encouraged to seek out the version that works best for you.

BOOKS ON TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

Aers, Lesley, and Nigel Wheale, eds. *Shakespeare in the Changing Curriculum*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Davis, James E., and Ronald E. Solomone, eds. *Teaching Shakespeare Today: Practical Approaches and Productive Strategies*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1993.

Epstein, Norrie. *The Friendly Shakespeare: A Thoroughly Painless Guide to the Best of the Bard*. New York: Viking, 1993.

Frey, Charles H. *Experiencing Shakespeare: Essays on Text, Classroom, and Performance*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988.

Gilbert, Miriam. "Teaching Shakespeare Through Performance," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 35 (1984), 601-608.

Griffin, C.W. "Teaching Shakespeare on Video." *English Journal*, 78:7 (1989), 40-43.

Robinson, Randal. *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language: Help for the Teacher and Student*. Urbana, IL: NCTE and ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 1989.

Rygiel, Mary Ann. *Shakespeare Among Schoolchildren: Approaches for the Secondary Classroom*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1992.

Salomone, Ronald E., and James E. Davis, eds. *Teaching Shakespeare into the 21st Century*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1997.



SIS 2015 cast members and students at Greybull High School during a workshop following *The Merchant of Venice*.

Shakespeare, a journal sponsored by Cambridge University Press and Georgetown University, focuses on the teaching of Shakespeare at the secondary and university levels. Email and editors at editors@shakespearemag.com

Shakespeare Quarterly, special teaching issue, 41: 2 (Summer 1990); special issue on teaching Shakespeare with women writers of his era, 47: 4 (Winter 1996).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

VIDEO

There are many fine film versions of *Hamlet*, including:

1948

Directed by and starring Laurence Olivier. 155 minutes.

1964

Richard Burton as Hamlet, directed by John Gielgud, filmed during a live performance on Broadway. 206 minutes

1969

Nicol Williamson as Hamlet, directed by Tony Richardson. 114 minutes

1979

Derek Jacobi as Hamlet, directed by Rodney Bennet for the BBC, Time Life Television as part of the series, "The Shakespeare Plays". 150 minutes

1990

Mel Gibson as Hamlet, directed by Franco Zeffirelli. 135 minutes

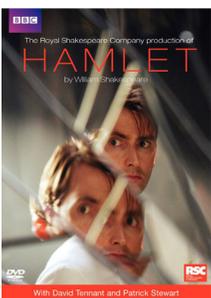
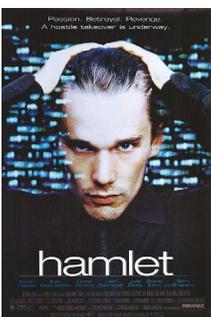
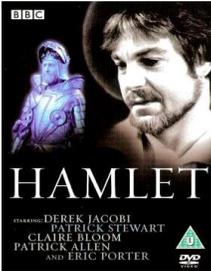
1996

Directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh. 238 minutes, with a 20 minute intermission

2000

Ethan Hawke as Hamlet, directed by Michael Almereyda, set in contemporary New York. 111 minutes

See also *Teaching Shakespeare: New Approaches* from the Folger Shakespeare Library, a guide by Peggy O'Brien, Former Education Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, available through Vineyard Video Productions.



ONLINE RESOURCES

Numerous sites now provide wonderful materials on Shakespeare:

For the website associated with Shakespeare magazine,
see www.shakespearemag.com

For texts of the plays, see the Shakespeare Homepage:
www.the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html

For information on the World Shakespeare Bibliography and links to other Shakespeare sites,
see www-english.tamu.edu/wsb/

Some other web pages we've found helpful:
www.folger.edu/hamlet

www.pbs.org/wnet/shakespeare-uncovered/uncategorized/hamlet-with-david-tennant/

www.calshakes.org/v4/media/teachers_guides/2012_Hamlet_TeachersGuide.pdf

www.yalerep.org/about_rep/willpower/hamlet-studyguide.pdf

www.classicstage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/hamlet_studyguide_15.pdf

www.bard.org/study-guides/hamlet-study-guide

EVERY PRODUCTION OF HAMLET is unique and needs unique poster art. Here are just a few posters from the thousands of times this play has been performed around the world! What would your *Hamlet* poster look like? Share it with Montana Shakespeare in the Parks on Facebook or @mtshakes on Instagram and use #montanahamlet #msis16 so we can follow the art!

