

SHAKESPEARE



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HAMLET

WILL IN ACTION - ACTIVITIES PACKET

**ACTIVITIES
FOR GRADES 1-12:
SYNOPSIS, SCENE
WORK, ACTING
EXERCISES, & MORE!**

HAMLET

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INTRODUCTION

These lesson plans are designed to introduce students to the world of Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. The exercises increase in complexity as students begin to familiarize themselves with the play and how the exercises function. Each section has activities suitable for different grade levels, denoted by the following icons:



most enjoyed by grades 1 - 5



most enjoyed by grades 6 - 12

You will need a large space in which to work, such as the school hall or gym. Depending on the age and range of ability within the group, this material could take four to six hours or more to cover, and you may choose to spread this out over several days, perhaps one day for each act of the play. Before you begin working with your students, familiarize yourself with *Hamlet*. A synopsis is located in the next section of this guide. Prior to beginning each of the sections and the associated activities, read the provided summary of each act to the students. You might also wish to show a scene or two from one of the films listed in the resources page at the end of the document.

In addition, there are several excellent versions of the story appropriate for elementary school children including Albert Cullum's *Shakespeare in the Classroom* (formerly *Shake Hands with Shakespeare*), Leon Garfield's adaptation in *Shakespeare Stories* (published by Puffin) or versions by Andrew Matthews and Tony Ross published by Orchard Books.

THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK - SYNOPSIS

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark! Horatio and several guards are visited by a ghost who bears a striking resemblance to their recently deceased king. Horatio wastes no time telling the king's son, Hamlet, about the sighting. The prince follows his friend outside and sees the ghost, who motions for him to follow. Against Horatio's advice, Hamlet goes with his father's spirit. The ghost tells Hamlet that he was murdered by Claudius, his brother and Hamlet's uncle, who acceded to the throne and added cruelty to his treason by marrying Hamlet's mother, Gertrude less than two months after the king's death. At the request of his ghostly father, Hamlet must

confine his revenge to Claudius, and as for his mother, "leave her to heaven." Hamlet, not entirely convinced of the truth of the ghost's testimony, vows revenge but struggles with how to avenge the murder. He becomes argumentative, broods, and begins to appear mad. He speculates whether revenge will bring satisfaction, or if he should end his own life. For Hamlet, no plan of action is obvious and he falls into a dark melancholy.

Polonius, advisor to the new king, is the father of Laertes and Ophelia (who loves Hamlet). As he leaves for France, Laertes advises his sister to beware of Hamlet. Polonius also tells her to refuse Hamlet's advances. Hamlet begins to act strangely towards Ophelia, so she tells Polonius. Believing that "neglected love" is the cause of Hamlet's melancholy, Polonius informs Claudius and Gertrude, but the king and queen are not so sure love is the cause, thinking instead that Hamlet may still be grieving for his father. Claudius sends for Hamlet's two schoolmates, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to carefully question him, and with Polonius, he also spies on a conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia. Soon, an angry Hamlet, perhaps aware that his uncle and Ophelia's father are watching, rejects the terrified Ophelia, proclaiming, "Get thee to a nunnery."

Meanwhile, a troupe of traveling actors arrives at the castle and Hamlet enlists their help to confirm his uncle's guilt. He rewrites a section of their play so it becomes a reenactment of his father's murder, hoping that when played before Claudius, he will become agitated and confirm his guilt. The play, "The Mousetrap," is performed. When the parallel murder is played, Claudius storms out of the room. Hamlet and Horatio are then convinced that Claudius is guilty. Hamlet is summoned by his mother, but along the way, discovers his uncle praying and almost kills him but, afraid that Claudius would go to heaven, he waits. Hamlet



goes to his mother's room to confront her while Polonius is eavesdropping behind a tapestry. Hamlet hears him, draws his sword and, thinking it is the king, stabs through the curtain and kills him. Upon learning of Polonius' murder, Claudius fears Hamlet's irrationality and gives orders sending him to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, along with a letter requesting that the English King kill Hamlet. Hamlet finds the letter and

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revises it so his traitorous friends are executed instead of him.

In the meantime, Laertes returns from France intent on avenging his father's death. Adding fuel to Laertes' fury, he discovers Ophelia has been driven mad by her father's death. Hearing by letter of Hamlet's return from England, King Claudius plots with Laertes, who agrees to kill Hamlet in a duel with a poison-tipped sword. As insurance, Claudius will also place a poisoned pearl in a goblet of wine. Laertes then receives news that Ophelia has gone to the river and, swimming with her heavy clothing on, was carried under and drowned. Hamlet returns to Denmark just as Ophelia's funeral is taking place. Grief-stricken, he confronts Laertes, admitting he has always loved Ophelia. Back at the castle, he informs Horatio that he must be prepared to die since death can strike at any moment. Osric, a ridiculous courtier, arrives, instructed by Claudius to arrange the fencing match between Laertes and Hamlet.



During the duel, as Queen Gertrude toasts her son, she mistakenly drinks from the goblet laced with poison and dies. Sport becomes a bona fide battle and Laertes cuts Hamlet. Before the prince dies, he counters, stealing Laertes' sword and wounding him with the poisoned blade. Laertes, with his last breath, proclaims, "The King's to blame." Hamlet then stabs King Claudius and makes him drink the rest of the poisoned wine. In his last few moments, Hamlet asks Horatio to tell his story to the world. Hamlet dies, his revenge complete. A Norwegian prince named Fortinbras, who earlier in the play led an army to Denmark and attacked Poland, enters with ambassadors from England reporting that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. Fortinbras is shocked by the sight of the entire royal family dead on the floor. Horatio tells him he will be the next king. Hamlet is mourned by

Fortinbras and Horatio, who instructs the court that the Prince will be buried with the honors of a soldier.



WARM-UP: CIRCLE OF SOUND

Participants form a circle with a few feet between each person. The leader explains the elements of the exercise, asking the students:

True or False: When we speak to someone it changes them.

Answer: TRUE! Even if it produces a small change, when we communicate, whatever is said will change the person to whom we speak because he/she will experience a thought and a feeling in reaction. If I say, "You just won a million dollars?" how would you feel?

With this in mind, as leader you turn to the person next to you and demonstrate and explain to the group: "Without touching, I will 'send' a sound, word or phrase with an accompanying gesture to the person next to me. He/she will feel something in response. In turn he/she will take that feeling and allow it to color the sound, word or phrase and will turn to the next person and say the exact same thing in a different way based on their response to my communication. The word travels in this way around the circle." Try this out now with the group and see if your instructions were clear or if there are questions.

Side Coaching: "Make eye contact before you speak" "Don't stop to think, just respond and speak!" "Allow your emotional reaction to change the word."

If the exercise is working you will get as many different sounding versions of the same word as there are players in the circle.

- Start with single evocative words like: "Startling" "Eerie" "Lazy" "Excited" "Confused"
- Then add a second word: "Very upset!" "Just exhausted!" "Really amazing!" "You Rock!" "No! NO!"
- Then perhaps just a sound or two: "OOO!" "Yuck!" "EEEEEEEEEE!" "Ahh..."
- Then a sentence: "I am so perplexed!" "You don't mean that." "Are you asking me?" "You always say that!"
- Now, send a word, sound or a sentence in both directions. There will be interactions as the words meet one person in the middle of the circle. Make sure people take just enough time to listen and respond, creating a two-line scene. It is fun and a good exercise in reacting immediately rather than

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calculating your response. As well, it gets you into the 'here and now' space.

- Then send some Shakespeare around the circle: "All the world's a stage!" "Wherefore art thou Romeo?" "O, for a muse of fire!" "Get thee to a nunnery!" "To be or not to be..."

When you repeat this exercise in future classes, warm up with single words and then start mixing it up: one word, a sentence, some Shakespeare, a vocal sound, etc.



WARM-UP: TOURING ELSINORE

This exercise is a version of 'Ship-to-Shore,' 'Captain's Coming' or 'North/South/East/West' to help students learn the important characters and locations in the play.

Each character has a phrase and an action. Choose your own or pick from the suggestions in Appendix 1.

- Model each character so that when you call out a name, the students respond with that character's phrase and action.
- When they have learned this, you then name each of the four walls of the room for a location of the play:
 - Throne room
 - Gertrude's bedchamber
 - Cemetery
 - Castle wall
- When you call out a location, the students run/walk swiftly to that wall.
- If you call out a character, they immediately perform the phrase with the action.
- Turn this activity into a game like 'Musical Chairs.' The student last to respond is 'out.' The winner is the last person left 'in.'

ACT 1: "SOMETHING IS ROTTEN IN THE STATE OF DENMARK..."

At Elsinore Castle in Denmark, three guards see the ghost of King Hamlet walk past them in the middle of the night. They bring along a scholar named Horatio, who says they should tell this to his friend, the young prince Hamlet. A mere two months after Hamlet's father died, his mother Gertrude married his uncle, Claudius who acceded to the throne, and Hamlet is not happy. When Horatio and the guards tell Hamlet they

saw his father's ghost, Hamlet goes with them and speaks with his father's ghost, who says he was murdered by Claudius. Hamlet vows to avenge his father's murder. Meanwhile, Polonius, the scheming assistant to King Claudius, is saying goodbye to his son, Laertes, who is going to school in France. Both Laertes and Polonius warn Ophelia, Polonius' daughter, not to go out with Prince Hamlet, her boyfriend. Before Laertes leaves, Polonius gives him advice so he will stay out of trouble.



SCENE WORK: HAMLET & HORATIO

Explain that you will now try playing a scene. Choose two students to play Hamlet and Horatio and side coach the following section:

Act I, Scene ii

Throne Room in Elsinore

HORATIO	Hail to your lordship!
HAMLET	Horatio,--or I do forget myself. And what is your affair in Elsinore?
HORATIO	My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
HAMLET	I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
HORATIO	Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon.
HAMLET	Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked meats Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables. My father!--methinks I see my father.
HORATIO	Where, my lord?
HAMLET	In my mind's eye, Horatio.
HORATIO	My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.
HAMLET	Saw? who?
HORATIO	My lord, the king your father.

Check the students' understanding of the scene, particularly phrases such as "Thrift, thrift" and "in my mind's eye."



SCENE WORK: POLONIUS & OPHELIA

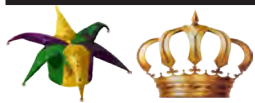
Use the same format as the younger students, but instead use the more complex and intense exchange between father and daughter. Side coaching for this

scene may include discussing with the student actors (without needing an answer) if they have ever had a conversation like this with their own parents and how they felt while having it?

Act I, Scene ii

A room in Polonius' house

- POLONIUS** What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?
- OPHELIA** So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.
- POLONIUS** What is between you? Give me up the truth.
- OPHELIA** He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders Of his affection to me.
- POLONIUS** Affection! pooh! you speak like a green girl. Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?
- OPHELIA** I do not know, my lord, what I should think.
- POLONIUS** I'll teach you: tender yourself more dearly.
- OPHELIA** My lord, he hath importuned me with love In honourable fashion.
- POLONIUS** Ay, fashion you may call it; go to, go to.
- OPHELIA** And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord, With almost all the holy vows of heaven.
- POLONIUS** Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. Ophelia, I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth, Have you give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet. Look to't, I charge you: come your ways.



STAY, ILLUSION!

This is a variation on the "Wax Museum" game. One student will portray the night watchman Marcellus and the rest of the class will be ghosts haunting Elsinore.

- The students playing ghosts will scatter around the room and freeze in a position they can comfortably hold for a long time.
- As "Marcellus" moves around the room amongst the other students, the "ghosts" will change position and try not to have Marcellus see them move.
- If he/she sees a ghost move, that student is eliminated.
- The game ends when one ghost is left. It is important that the student playing Marcellus keeps moving, making it easier for the ghosts to change position.
- **ADDITION FOR GRADES 6-12:** To add a layer of difficulty to this exercise, if Marcellus catches a ghost moving, the ghost must say a line of text from *Hamlet* (ie, "To be or not to be..."; "The lady doth protest too much, methinks..."; "Get thee to a nunnery..."; etc.) to stay in the game.



ACTIONING THE TEXT: POLONIUS' ADVICE TO LAERTES

- Ask the students to form a circle and give out the lines below, one line among 2, 3, or 4 students, depending on the size of your class (the speech is printed in Appendix 2).
- Explain that this speech contains one of the most famous lines in literature ("To thine own self be true") and this is a very tender, caring moment between father and son. Go through the text with them and clear up any vocabulary problems.
 1. And these few precepts in thy memory
 2. See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
 3. Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
 4. Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
 5. Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
 6. Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
 7. But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;
 8. For the apparel oft proclaims the man.
 9. Neither a borrower nor a lender be.
 10. This above all: to thine ownself be true,
 11. And it must follow, as the night the day,
 12. Thou canst not then be false to any man.
- Now ask each group to choose 2 or 3 words in their line and find a gesture for each of these words. Obviously, these words should be important ones (not 'and,' 'if,' 'the,' etc.). Ask them to spend a few minutes rehearsing their line. They need to speak loudly and clearly, and their moves should be strong and bold.
- When the groups are ready, go round the circle getting them to deliver their lines in turn.
- At the end, ask the students which groups did well and why. What do we learn from observing them?
- Give the students one minute to rehearse and "heighten" (see exercise on page 11) and then play the line again.
- **ADDITION FOR GRADES 6-12:** Instead of one line, have the students play whole sentences, perhaps the entire monologue.

ACT 2: "METHOD TO HAMLET'S MADNESS..."

Everyone at Elsinore has seen Hamlet behaving very strangely. They all agree he might be mad, or crazy, but why? Polonius plans with King Claudius to spy on Hamlet using Ophelia as bait to find out why Hamlet is mad. Meanwhile, Claudius and Gertrude have asked Hamlet's two friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to come to Denmark and ask Hamlet what has been bothering him; on the road to Denmark, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern met a group of actors and brought them to Denmark as a present for the royal family. Hamlet intends to use these actors to recreate his father's murder. See how Claudius reacts and find out if the ghost was telling the truth.



WORDS, WORDS, WORDS: HAMLET & POLONIUS

Students will better understand Polonius' frustration with Hamlet, as well as Hamlet's delight in fooling Polonius (during Act II, Scene ii) by playing this variation on "Freeze Tag."

- One student will play Polonius, and the rest of the students will play Hamlet, all at once.
- Polonius will walk quickly (not run) about the space, trying to catch a Hamlet.
- When a Hamlet is caught, Polonius asks Hamlet one of the following questions, and the caught student must answer with the accurate response, or he/she is "out":

POLONIUS: How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET: Well, God-a-mercy.

P: Do you know me, my lord?

H: Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.

P: What do you read, my lord?

H: Words, words, words.

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

H: Into my grave?



A PIECE OF WORK: HAMLET & ROSENCRANTZ/ GUILDENSTERN

Use the same format as the above exercise, but this time it is Hamlet who pursues the other students representing his evasive friends; intensify the exchanges as the subject matter is more serious:

HAMLET: How dost thou?

ROSENCRANTZ/GUILDENSTERN: As the indifferent children of the earth.

H: Denmark's a prison.

R/G: Then is the world one.

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

R/G: What should we say my lord?

H: Man delights not me, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

R/G: My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.



ROSENCRANTZ & GUILDENSTERN: MIRRORS

These two characters are Hamlet's friends from school. In both stage and film adaptations, they are often dressed similarly and are never seen apart. A good exercise to develop this sort of camaraderie amongst the two actors playing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is to play "Mirrors."

- Ask the students to find a partner. Sometimes it is advantageous to have students work together whodon't know each other very well. If there is an odd number of students, the instructor(s) should pair with a student.
- Ask them to imagine that they are best friends. Tell them that they know each other so well that they know what the other one is going to do almost before they do it.
- Standing facing each other, they choose a leader and a follower, and begin a mirror where the leader moves and the follower becomes the mirror image across from them.
- Tell the group that you shouldn't be able to see who is leading, and to make slow deliberate movements; the object is not to cause the other person to make mistakes.
- Ask them to switch roles as leader and follower, a transition that should be made without talking.
- It may help if you model this exercise with a student or another adult, emphasizing that movements should be slow and smooth, always checking that your partner is keeping pace with you.

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- After a minute or two, choose a pair that is doing well and challenge the class to see who is leading. Ask the class to evaluate what the pair is doing well and get them to improve their own work.
- If they are doing well, ask them to try this mirroring exercise side-by-side, using peripheral vision. Talk them through a series of tasks: they are in class, at recess, etc., all as part of their imagined life with their best friend.
- Again, choose a couple of pairs to watch as a group and discuss.

ACT 3: "TO BE OR NOT TO BE..."

After Rosencrantz and Guildenstern fail to discover the cause of Hamlet's behavior, Claudius and Polonius decide to spy on Hamlet. They send Ophelia to break up with him, but Hamlet reacts violently; he yells at Ophelia and tells her to go to a nunnery. Claudius decides Hamlet is dangerous and must be sent away to England. Before that happens, though, Hamlet presents his play about his father's death to the royal court. Claudius stands suddenly and leaves; Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, is angry with him and sends for him, but Polonius decides to spy on the conversation by hiding behind a tapestry. On the way to his mother's room, Hamlet sees Claudius praying; he almost kills him, but decides not to because the murdered might go to heaven instead. Gertrude and Hamlet begin arguing, Polonius cries for help, and Hamlet, thinking it's the king, kills Polonius. Hamlet continues to confront his mother for marrying Claudius so soon after Hamlet's father died. She breaks down crying, and Hamlet drags away Polonius' body, hiding it.



"HOW NOW, A RAT?"

Several times in the play, Polonius suggests spying on Hamlet. But to make sure he's hearing properly, our actors must clearly enunciate and articulate their lines.

- All students and teachers form a circle.
- Choose a line or phrase from Hamlet and whisper it to the person on your right, articulating as clearly as possible.
- Each person then whispers what they think they heard to the person on their right until it reaches the last person, who should be able to say the original phrase. If you're not articulating well enough, the phrase will most likely be incorrect.



"SUIT THE ACTION TO THE WORD..."

Hamlet gives a lengthy explanation to the players about how they should perform properly. The players who visit Elsinore are very crucial to the plot, and this is a great chance to demonstrate the basic structure of theatre: a beginning, a middle, and an end.

- Put the students into groups of 3 or 4 (or approximate to the size of the class).
- Have a quick, overview discussion with the students over what exactly constitutes beginning, middle, and end.
- Give the groups 7-10 minutes amongst themselves to create a short scene with a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Each group performs their short scene before the class.
- After all the scenes have been performed, lead a discussion amongst the students assessing their performance.



ACTIONING THE TEXT: FINDING HAMLET'S VOICE

There are a number of ways to split up a soliloquy in order to discover and identify the conflicting feelings and ideas a character may have. This method is used by Chris Renino of Scarsdale High School in Scarsdale, NY, who developed it from techniques used by Tony Hill, formerly Education Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and Michael Tolaydo. In *Shakespeare Set Free: Vol. 1*, Renino applies a more detailed version of this method to Macbeth's "If it were done when 'tis done" soliloquy, on which it works equally well.

- Ask students to stand in a circle in an open space. Distribute copies of the 19 lines from Hamlet's classic "To be or not to be" soliloquy from Act III, Scene i (see Appendix 3 for the script).
- Ask one student to begin reading aloud from the beginning of the passage until he or she encounters a full stop - a period, semicolon, question mark, or exclamation point. After the full stop, the next student reads until the next full stop, and so on around the circle.
- After the group has gone through the soliloquy once, ask two students to come into the center of the circle and, facing one another, alternate reading until a full stop.

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Example:

STUDENT 1 To be or not to be: that is the question;

STUDENT 2 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?

STUDENT 1 To die: to sleep;

STUDENT 2 To sleep: perchance to dream:
...and so on.

- Pause to discuss the meaning of the lines and the conflicting emotions Hamlet feels here. What would happen to him should he take his own life? Does he think death will end his pain? Does he even know what happens in the afterlife?
- Next, divide the entire class into two lines, facing each other. Each chorus reads to a full stop, as before. Before they begin, tell students to speak louder and louder as they read, so that by the end of the reading they crescendo to shouting at each other.
- Finally, divide the class into groups of five or six. Ask them to divide the script so that it reads like an argument between Hamlet's several conflicting "voices." They may find more than two voices at this point.
- Ask each subgroup to report back on the way its members divided the script.
- Discuss what discoveries students made in the course of this activity.

ACT 4: "MY THOUGHTS BE BLOODY..."

Claudius comes to Gertrude's room and learns of Polonius' murder, but Hamlet is gone. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern bring Hamlet to Claudius, who is looking for Polonius' body. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are ordered to take Hamlet away to England. Meanwhile, Ophelia has learned her father, Polonius, has been killed and she goes insane. While Claudius and Gertrude decide what to do with her, Ophelia's brother, Laertes, returns from France, wanting to kill Claudius and avenge Polonius' death. But Claudius explains to Laertes that it is Hamlet who killed Polonius. Both come up with a plan to kill Hamlet while swordfighting and make it look like an accident: Laertes will poison the tip of his sword so if he scratches Hamlet, he'll die. If that fails, Claudius will offer Hamlet a drink with a poisoned pearl

in it. While Claudius and Laertes are plotting against Hamlet, Gertrude comes in to say that Ophelia has drowned. Meanwhile, Hamlet returns to Denmark, escaping from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (which will be explained in the next act), and reuniting with his friend Horatio. While passing through a cemetery, Hamlet and Horatio see the royal court at Ophelia's funeral. Laertes and Hamlet both leap into Ophelia's grave and fight, but the fight is halted, and Claudius persuades Laertes to wait until the next day's swordfighting contest.



SPEAK DAGGERS TO ME

In this act, plenty of accusations, speculations, and insults are thrown about. But what happens if this dialogue is taken out of context, used with a different intention or objective? Will you hear these lines with a fresh interpretation? This exercise will utilize the same table of characters, text, and gestures used in the "Tour of Elsinore" warm-up. The table itself is located in Appendix 1.

- The students form two lines at either end of the room that face each other.
- Each student will choose a character (and the corresponding text) and the teacher will choose which line will initiate and which line will respond.
- The teacher then chooses a set of verbs that students will use for their text (use the list below or choose your own):

Ask/Answer

Accuse/Deny

Interrogate/Confess

Inquire/Tell

Beg/Refuse

Command/Snub

Declare/Rejoice

Observe/Realize

Discover/Reject

Blame/Comfort



- Two students from opposing ends of the lines will cross diagonally to each other and meet in the center; one will begin by saying his or her line and the other student will respond with his or her line.

- For example, a student with Laertes' line will walk towards another student who may have chosen Claudius and the two-line conversation would be: "The devil take thy soul!" with a response of, "Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go."
- Once everyone has gone, switch places randomly and have the other students initiate their text, and so on.



HEIGHTENING

"Heightening" means to energize. When you speak, move or feel something on the stage, the communication can be intensified by adding focus and energy to sound and movement. This does NOT mean you have to get LOUDER, FASTER or EMOTIONALLY EXTREME. On the contrary, you can "play the opposite" and get softer, slower or show less emotion and you still will succeed in adding intensity to the moment on stage as long as you are changing to intensify the communication, and it succeeds in affecting your scene partner.

- In a circle, demonstrate heightening this sentence: "There is simply nothing else I can do."
- Say it in a calm and normal way and ask someone to heighten it. Identify what they did to intensify the communication; for example:
 - LOUDER or SOFTER
 - SLOWER or FASTER
 - USED A CRYING VOICE or a LAUGHING VOICE
 - PUNCHED EVERY WORD or SPOKE IN MONOTONE
 - DYNAMIC or CATATONIC
- After pointing out the use of using an opposite vocal or physical attack, use a line (or lines) from Hamlet to explore and heighten.

ADDITION FOR GRADES 6-12: Explore "heightening" in the scene provided in Appendix 4.

ACT 5: "GOODNIGHT, SWEET PRINCE..."

Before Laertes and Hamlet meet in a swordfighting contest, Hamlet explains to his friend Horatio how he escaped from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: pirates attacked Hamlet's ship, and Hamlet left with them, but before he left his two friends behind, Hamlet switched the letter from Claudius (telling England to kill Hamlet) with one that ordered England to execute

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern instead. Hamlet seems content that he might lose the contest with Laertes, and Horatio asks him to quit, but Hamlet refuses. He offers an apology to Laertes, and the two fight before everyone in the castle. When Hamlet scores a hit on Laertes, Gertrude proposes a toast to her son, but she drinks from the poisoned cup that Claudius set out. Then Laertes scratches Hamlet with his poisoned sword and the two fight in a rage; Hamlet cuts Laertes with the same poisoned sword, then Gertrude collapses from the poisoned drink and dies. Laertes, just before dying himself, says King Claudius is to blame. Hamlet stabs Claudius, finally getting his revenge, but then Hamlet dies from the sword's poison. With his dying breath, he asks Horatio to tell his story. Hamlet is given a soldier's burial by Prince Fortinbras from Norway, who has arrived to conquer Denmark.



HAMLET & OPHELIA

This exercise has its roots in the movement-based method called "Viewpoints," developed by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. Hamlet and Ophelia are two characters who demonstrate a very strong emotional connection, and that connection is crucial; the audience has to believe it is a core relationship in this complex play, it is something to which students will relate. The specifics of this connection (i.e. young love) do not need to be discussed among the students; it should be explained that this is entirely in the students' own imagination and they should react to their partner as they would on stage, so the connection is created organically as the scene is played, naturally and spontaneously. This exercise will help students focus on the other person in the scene; it's also suggested you use 3 or 4 minutes of instrumental music.

REVISION FOR GRADES 1-5: Instead of "Hamlet & Ophelia," substitute "Hamlet and the Ghost," emphasizing the father/son relationship rather than a boyfriend/girlfriend situation. Adapt other facets of the exercise as necessary.

- Students will form two lines of 3 - 4 facing each other. One line is slightly more downstage from the other so when the lines start walking towards each other, each student will pass between two others.
- Each line should move as one; students must connect not only with their partner across the room, but with the others in their respective line.

HAMLET

- **FIRST PASS:** When the music starts, the lines move towards the other end of the space, slowly and deliberately (much like the “Mirrors” exercise earlier in this guide) and the walk should be a gradual “heel-toe” movement; the students should not make eye contact during the first pass, but should sense the beginnings of a strong connection.
- **ROTATION:** As the students reach the other end of the space, everyone turns downstage to make eye contact with their partner across the space for the first time; the idea being that the connection would be strong enough to make that person turn around and make eye contact with his/her partner.
- **SECOND PASS:** While maintaining eye contact, the students move towards each other, strengthening the connection through the eye contact. As the students pass each other, they should turn their heads and continue moving forward, always keeping eye contact until they can turn heads no further.
- **ENDING:** Once the eye contact is broken, students return to facing forward and continue moving towards the other end of the space. Once there, the students decide whether or not to turn back to completely face their partner, a half or quarter turn, or to not turn at all. This all depends on how strong they think their connection was.
- Afterwards, discuss the experience during the exercise and how the students perceived it.
- This is a rather advanced exercise and hopefully over the past four sections, the students have developed a foundation on which they can perform this exercise quite well, preparing them for the emotional complexities of performing Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

RECURRING THEMES

Hamlet’s only living parent is his mother. Single parents are quite common in Shakespeare’s plays. Ask the students if they know of any other plays, films, television shows, etc. where this happens and the meaning and reason behind it. Here is a list of some Shakespearean plays where single parents are present and influential to the story:

- *The Tempest*
- *The Taming of the Shrew*
- *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*
- *The Comedy of Errors*
- *The Merchant of Venice*
- *Much Ado About Nothing*

- *As You Like It*
- *Richard III*
- *Titus Andronicus*
- *Coriolanus*
- *King Lear*
- *Othello*
- *All’s Well That Ends Well*

CREDITS

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Pg. 1 - John Flack in *QUICK BREWED-MACBETH*

Pg. 2 - Khnemu Menu-Ra, Michael B. Perkins in *QUICK-BREWED MACBETH*

HAMLET

APPENDIX 1

Use these character phrases and actions in the “Warm-Up” activity on pages 2 and 3 and the “Speak Daggers to Me” exercise on page 7.

CHARACTER	PHRASE	ACTION
HAMLET	“To be or not to be, that is the question”	Fist under chin (à la Rodin’s <i>The Thinker</i>)
CLAUDIUS	“Madness in great ones must not unwatch’d go.”	Stroke “beard”
OPHELIA	“O woe is me!”	Back of hand to forehead
POLONIUS	“Though this be madness, yet there is method in it”	Fingers steepled (“Scheming”)
LAERTES	“The devil take thy soul!”	“En garde” pose as in swordplay
GHOST	“Revenge my foul and most unnatural murder.”	Rigid posture, arm extended and pointing

APPENDIX 2

Use for "Actioning the Text: Polonius' Advice to Laertes" on page 4 and cut out.

1. And these few precepts in thy memory
2. See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
3. Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
4. Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
5. Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
6. Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
7. But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;
8. For the apparel oft proclaims the man.
9. Neither a borrower nor a lender be.
10. This above all: to thine ownself be true,
11. And it must follow, as the night the day,
12. Thou canst not then be false to any man.

APPENDIX 3

Use for "Actioning the Text: Finding Hamlet's Voice" on page 6.

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;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

HAMLET

APPENDIX 4

Use for "Heightening" exercise on page 8

- HAMLET** Now, mother, what's the matter?
- GERTRUDE** Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.
- HAMLET** Mother, you have my father much offended.
- GERTRUDE** Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.
- HAMLET** Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.
- GERTRUDE** What have I done, that thou darest wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?
- HAMLET** Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, makes marriage-vows
As false as trader's oaths.
- GERTRUDE** Ay me, what act,
That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?
- HAMLET** Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See, what a grace was seated on this brow;
This was your husband. Look you now, what follows:
Here is your husband; like a mildew'd ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
- GERTRUDE** O Hamlet, speak no more:
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.