

Dear teachers,

the following questions and topics are just ideas and suggestions to prepare yourself and your students for our performance of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Please add, remove, and change as much as you like.

We are looking forward to seeing you in the theatre and are always happy to receive feedback on this pack and the performance from you,

### *The Parlement of Foules*

#### **Lesson 1: Shakespeare and his Time**

To most of us, William Shakespeare is known as the writer of some of the most popular written works existing, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and many more.

To truly understand his work, we must take a closer look at the world he lived in -today known as the Elizabethan Era.

#### **Task:**

- Find reasons why this era is named after one specific person
- What could that mean?

#### Theatre in Elizabethan England

To get your students smoothly into the topic of the Elizabethan era and Shakespeare, a movie lesson might be the perfect way to start. Instead of watching an adaptation, you can for example use this film, in which actors from "Shakespeare in Love" explain Shakespeare, his words and plays -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTtPW-zT45k>

As well as this short clip from the TV show "Horrible Histories" on the Globe Theatre -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLBFotk4WdA>

Or the documentary "The Time-Traveller's Guide to Elizabethan England" -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFNCFMT6Tas>

Short presentations can help your students understand why and how certain things were handled and dealt with. Students should take the differences and similarities between now and then into closer consideration.

Here are some ideas for short presentations:

- Master of the Revels
- King James I
- Mary Queen of Scots
- Globe Theatre
- Education in the Elizabethan era
- Music of the Elizabethan Era
- The Poor Law
- 4 presentations about Queen Elizabeth:
  - her life in general
  - her relation towards her people
  - her relation towards other countries
  - her relation towards religion

## **Lesson 2: Shakespeare's Language**

William Shakespeare invented about 2000 words and expressions that are still in use today. You will be surprised how many everyday words have first been recorded in Shakespeare's plays...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=898jUMAoW1M>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbgZxAIiO04>

**Task:** pick 10 words/expressions and research which play they come from and what context they're first used in. Are they still being used in a similar context? Do they have a different meaning now?

Shakespeare's plays are full of very creative insults. Make up some of your own with this Shakespearean insult sheet:

[http://www.londonshakespeare.org.uk/junior/shakespeare\\_insult\\_kit.htm](http://www.londonshakespeare.org.uk/junior/shakespeare_insult_kit.htm)

The language of Shakespeare's plays will not sound like English to you sometimes. But if you look closer, you will find that it is actually not that difficult at all. Especially because Shakespeare chose his words very carefully to give his actors all the instructions they needed to play the characters well.

In Shakespeare's time, there were two forms of the word "you": "you" and "thou". "You" was much more formal, "thou" more personal. A bit like "du" and "Sie". It is often a good hint to look for "you"s and "thou"s to find out more about the relationship between two characters in Shakespeare's plays. A beggar would never say "thou" to a king, as you might not call your headmaster "du". A king, however, will possibly say "thou" to the beggar to show that he is much lower in status than the king.

Early modern English, the English spoken at Shakespeare's time, was a lot more similar to German than today's English. Some forms of verbs might confuse you at first, but "canst" or "wouldst" are simply "kannst" and "willst/würdest". The "-st" ending is, just as in German, indicating a 2nd person singular form of the verb.

To fit the iambic pentameter, Shakespeare sometimes shortens words. "ever" becomes "e'er" (pronounced like "heir" (=Erbe)); "is it" becomes "is't" and so forth.

Some regular verbs in their past tense forms are pronounced differently to fit the iambic pentameter. E.g. you would say "borrowed" as "borrowd". In Shakespeare's plays, however, you would have to pronounce it "borrow-ed". Unless, of course, the text tells you to say "borrow'd". Read carefully! All your instructions are right there in the text. This leaflet by the Royal Shakespeare Company will tell you all you need to know.

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/downloads/rsc-shakespeares-language-2011.pdf>

**Task:** In groups of 4, try to mark the iambic pattern in the excerpt from Hamlet Act I Scene ii. Discuss where you disagree. Where are lines being completed by the next person? What could that indicate? What does the use of "you" and "thou" tell you about the relationship between the characters? Where do you find asonances or aliterations you should emphasise when you are speaking? Divide up the roles and practice the scene to present it in front of your classmates. Be prepared for questions about your decisions!

KING CLAUDIUS

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?

You told us of some suit; what is't, Laertes?

You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,

And loose your voice: what wouldst thou beg, Laertes,

That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?

The head is not more native to the heart,

The hand more instrumental to the mouth,  
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.  
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES

My dread lord,  
Your leave and favour to return to France;  
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,  
To show my duty in your coronation,  
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,  
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France  
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

KING CLAUDIUS

Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,  
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!  
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son,--  
How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET

Not so, my lord; I am too much i' the sun.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
Do not for ever with thy veiled 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 GERTRUDE

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,

Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,

No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,

Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,

Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,

That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,

For they are actions that a man might play:

But I have that within which passeth show;

These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING CLAUDIUS

'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, and the survivor bound

In filial obligation for some term

To do obsequious sorrow: but to persevere

In obstinate condolment is a course

Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief;

It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,

A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,  
An understanding simple and unschool'd:  
For what we know must be and is as common  
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,  
Why should we in our peevish opposition  
Take it to heart? Fie! 'tis a fault to heaven,  
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,  
To reason most absurd: whose common theme  
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,  
From the first corse till he that died to-day,  
'This must be so.' We pray you, throw to earth  
This unprevailing woe, and think of us  
As of a father: for let the world take note,  
You are the most immediate to our throne;  
And with no less nobility of love  
Than that which dearest father bears his son,  
Do I impart toward you. For your intent  
In going back to school in Wittenberg,  
It is most retrograde to our desire:  
And we beseech you, bend you to remain  
Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye,  
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

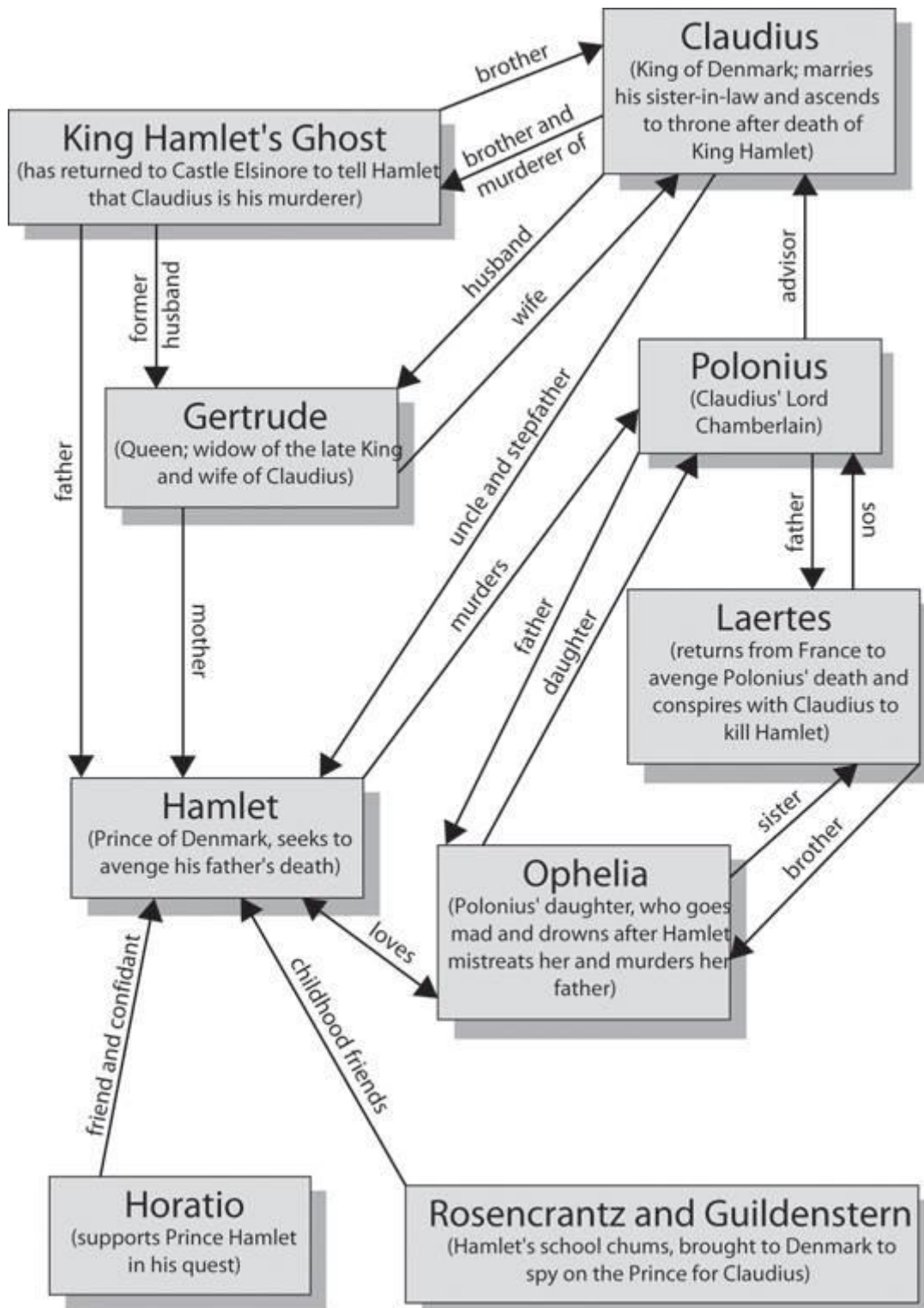
Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:  
I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

HAMLET

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

### Lesson 3: Characters and relationships

#### Character Map



#### Thumbnail Sketches of Major Characters

**Hamlet:** Before the play, Hamlet used to enjoy life, studying in Wittenberg and indulging in witty conversations with his friends. However, at the beginning of the play, Hamlet has

already undergone a major change. As a reaction to his uncle and his mother having presented him with a *fait accompli* regarding their marriage and the succession to the throne after his father's unexpected death, Hamlet is not receptive anymore for what they have to say in their defence. His wit has turned into bitter sarcasm. Being the son of a warrior king, Hamlet, who studies philosophy in Wittenberg, always had the feeling of being a great disappointment to his father, especially in contrast to the impulsive and energetic Laertes, who is so much more like Hamlet Sr. than Hamlet Jr. himself could ever be. Nevertheless, Hamlet has a strong sense of duty and therefore mourns his father with the necessary respect. Due to their similarities in character, Hamlet and Claudius used to be very friendly and close, which is why Hamlet feels especially betrayed by his uncle and his mother, Gertrude. Meeting the ghost gives Hamlet a legitimate reason to despise his mother and even more his uncle. Throughout the play, Hamlet increasingly loses his sense of reality. After Ophelia betrays him by allying with her father, Polonius, Hamlet fully sets his heart on achieving his aim of murdering Claudius. He surrenders to fatalism and acts on the motto: Kill Claudius or die trying.

**Claudius** is the new king of Denmark and Hamlet's uncle. He murders the old king of Denmark, his brother, whom he deems unfit to be king because of his violent nature and his love for war. He marries Gertrude, whom he has secretly had a crush on for quite a while. He adopts Hamlet Jr., making him heir of the throne, having had a very good relationship with him before his father's death. Claudius is a caring, diplomatic and far-sighted ruler, much appreciated by his subjects. His thoughtful decision-making changes over the course of the play, as a somewhat impulsive act makes things get out of control.

**Gertrude** is Hamlet's mother and queen of Denmark. She was married to Hamlet Sr. when she was still very young and though she was a very dutiful and loving young wife, she often resented her husband for leaving her alone in Elsinore to go off to war. After Hamlet Sr.'s death she married his brother Claudius to give Hamlet a new father -the uncle and nephew had always gotten on very well-, to ensure Hamlet's claim to the throne and, although not primarily, because she and Claudius had always felt attracted to each other. Hamlet's strong opposition towards the marriage and especially Claudius make her feel like she has failed her son and her duties as mother and queen. When she learns that her son might be mad and her first husband might not have died of natural causes at all, her state of exasperation and feeling of failure and guilt will only get worse and worse.

**Ophelia** is mainly driven by her love for others, especially Hamlet and Laertes, and her sense of duty towards her father Polonius. Because of her caring nature, she continually strives to make others happy, even if it means that she herself suffers as a result. Hamlet and Ophelia grew up together in Elsinore. Their friendship has slowly developed into something more serious – even though both of them still struggle to come to terms with this fact. Ophelia seems a lot more certain than Hamlet that her feeling is indeed love, and his inconstancies and rejections seriously damage her romantic ideal of true and unconditional love. In her attempt to fulfil everyone's expectations, Ophelia is torn between her love for Hamlet and her duties as Polonius's obedient daughter. She wears herself out in a desperate attempt to reconcile these conflicting expectations, especially sacrificing her love for the sake of state matters. Eventually, Ophelia proves to be too fragile for the intrigue of 'rotten' Denmark: she is crushed mercilessly by the power-play at the Danish court.



**Horatio** is Hamlet's best friend and fellow student. His primary goal is to keep Hamlet (and later Ophelia) safe because he is constantly worried about him. The most prominent development in Horatio's character happens in the beginning of the play; when he encounters the Ghost, he realises that he needs to take action. Finding out that he can be brave when he needs to, gives Horatio strength throughout the play. He is the only stable variable left in Hamlet's life, and Horatio knows that he is needed even though he would never say it out loud. Of course Horatio has his own wishes and problems but in Hamlet's time of need he focuses on helping his friend. This selflessness defines his character throughout the play. He is loyal, caring, and honest, which makes him an invaluable friend to Hamlet. Horatio feels deeply sorry for anyone in pain; he suffers with Hamlet, Ophelia, and Gertrude, but keeps his own feelings mostly to himself. When Hamlet dies it is the end of the world to Horatio and he is, for the first time, completely lost.

**Laertes** is a young man from the upper-middle class, who lives at the Danish court, and thus has close connections to the royal family. He is the son of the King's chief counsellor Polonius, and grew up with Hamlet with whom he has always had a friendly rivalry, that now turns slightly more serious. Laertes is jealous of Hamlet who, even though he is not much of a threat in conventional sense, stands above him in social ranking and is also a very intellectual man. Their relationship faces additional complications because Hamlet has expressed interest in Ophelia, Laertes' sister. Ophelia and Laertes are very close and he feels protective of his slightly younger sister since they do not have a lot in the way of family, being raised by Polonius alone. Laertes has always had good connections to his father, due to the fact that he is Polonius' only son. He is a very short-tempered young man who enjoys the good sides of life maybe a little too much. Drinking, fencing and womanising are the kind of joys he expresses much interest in, which is why he prefers living in France where he can revel in his preferred hobbies. He is not yet ready for a life in court and does not have much of an opinion on the political bantering in the royal family. He is, however, aware of his duties, and is a proud person, who lays much importance on the honour of his family. For this reason he seeks to avenge his father's and sister's deaths which he holds Hamlet responsible for.

**Polonius** is the Chief Counsellor, i.e. the closest and most trusted advisor of the king. He is the oldest character in the play and begins to feel the bodily struggles of age, yet he is too proud to admit that. In general, Polonius has a slightly high perception of himself, considering himself very clever, cunning and influential. He wants to know about everything and thinks that, because of his status as the king's advisor, he is pulling all the strings. Being from the upper-middle class he has worked his way to the top and now tries to do everything to maintain his position. Over the years he has developed a wide net of informants, all spying for him. Although Polonius is a clever man, he is stuck in his old days and therefore cannot quite follow the events in the castle.

Polonius has two children, Laertes and Ophelia. He is very proud of his son and wishes him to become a smart, respectable gentleman who will carry on the success Polonius has established. As for his daughter, he does not really care for her. For him she is more of a nuisance, an unpleasant duty. However, in the conflict with Hamlet he realises that he can use her in order to get to the prince.

Polonius does not really care for Hamlet. However, he realises that he might become a threat to his position which is why he then tries to find the cause for Hamlet's behaviour.

**Rosencrantz and Guildenstern** are two fellow students of Hamlet that are summoned to the court by King Claudius. Hoping for an extensive reward, they loyally seek to fulfil his command of detecting the reason for Hamlet's behaviour. However, they do not disrespect or betray their friend Hamlet intentionally. Unfortunately, betrayal is exactly what Hamlet sees in their service for the King. Even though this worsens their relationship, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not giving up. Nevertheless, they slowly become aware of their situation and get more and more cautious and insecure. While Hamlet's behaviour enrages Rosencrantz, Guildenstern falls silent, shocked by the events.

## **Lesson 4: Plot**

### Short summary

“Hamlet” is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare and published in 1603 in London. The play tells about Hamlet, the prince of Denmark, who struggles with his current situation: His father, the former King of Denmark, has died. And only weeks after the funeral his uncle Claudius has come to the throne and has married Hamlet’s mother Gertrude.

One night, a ghost in the shape of his dead father appears to Hamlet. The ghost reveals to him that Claudius is responsible for his death. The conversation with the ghost provokes Hamlet’s desire to take revenge on his uncle for the murder of his father.

It does not remain unnoticed that something is on Hamlet’s mind. Gertrude wonders whether her remarriage with his uncle weighs upon Hamlet. Polonius, the chief counsellor of King Claudius, then discovers the feelings of love Hamlet has for Polonius’ daughter Ophelia which might be the reason for Hamlet’s odd behaviour.

Meanwhile Hamlet arranges a play that should reveal if King Claudius is truly responsible for the death of his father.

Claudius’ reaction to the play betrays him and his secret crime to Hamlet. But suddenly circumstances change when Hamlet accidentally kills Polonius. Now Claudius is warned about the danger of getting killed by Hamlet. Therefore, Claudius decides to send Hamlet to England to escape his reventfulness. He initiates to get Hamlet killed on his way to England.

Ophelia goes mad with grief about the death of her father Polonius and is soon after found dead in a stream. Polonius’ son Laertes returns from France to find out that his father has been murdered. He wants to take revenge on Hamlet for this crime.

Claudius’ attempt to get Hamlet out of the way obviously failed, since Hamlet returns alive. At Ophelia’s funeral Hamlet gets confronted with the latest events and his adversary Laertes. The two young decide to duel. Who is going to win the fight? And what happens with the cup filled with poisoned wine that is supposed to be Claudius’ second attempt to kill Hamlet? Who will survive this catastrophe and rule over Denmark?

**Task:**

“Something is rotten in the state of Denmark” (Hamlet Act I Scene iv), Marcellus to Horatio) is one famous statement in the play “Hamlet”.

Taking the thumbnails about the characters and the character map from last lesson as well as the plot into account –what could be rotten in the state of Denmark? How would you explain the word “rotten” in this context?

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/quickquotes/quickquotehamletdenmark.html>

**Task:**

Imagine you have witnessed Hamlet’s return and his verbal fight with Laertes at Ophelia’s funeral and you want to be the first to tell everyone about the events in detail. Then write/give a short report of how you experienced the situation at the funeral.

**Lesson 5: Religion/Superstition/Ghosts**

Religion played a very important part in the life of Elizabethan people. The church influenced almost every aspect of everyday activity. Before and still during Elizabeth’s reign, there was a kind of war going on between Catholics and Protestants. Elizabeth firmly established the protestant Church of England while at first tolerating later prosecuting Catholics. Read more about it on the following website:

<http://people.opposingviews.com/religious-life-elizabethan-era-5189.html>

Albeit very devoted Christians, Elizabethans, nobility and commoners alike, believed in a lot of partly very ancient superstitions. Some of them are still relevant today. Find out about some of them here:

<http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/elizabethan-superstitions.htm>

<http://www.saintives.com/essays/superstitions.pdf>

A central supernatural element in Hamlet is the Ghost. He appears dressed like Hamlet’s father to reveal the cause of his untimely death. Explore the world of ghosts and the ghost in Hamlet here (this website provides great material for short presentations on each section))

<http://elsinore.ucsc.edu/Ghost/ghost.html>

When Ophelia goes mad, she brings a bouquet of flowers to court and hands them to various characters. Like most things, flowers had symbolic meaning in the Elizabethan age (and still today). You will find a list of the flowers and their meaning below.

Task: With your knowledge of the characters and the plot, imagine you are Ophelia. Whom would you give which flower and why? You might like to look for images of the flowers and their German names, too.

Rosemary= remembrance

Pansies= thoughts

Fennel= Flattery, deceit

Columbines= Ingratitude, forsaken lovers, cuckoldry

Rue= Sorrow, repentance

Daisy= Innocence

Violet= Faithfulness, strong connection to death

(Source: <http://purchaseflowersonline.blogspot.de/2011/11/ophelias-flowers-meanings-and-symbolism.html>)

### **Lesson 6: Murder and Suicide**

Like today, crimes were systematically punished in Elizabethan England. Unlike today, however, there were different punishments for people, depending on their social class.

<http://de.slideshare.net/vihaankohli/elizabethan-crime-and-punishments>

Until the 1960s, suicide was considered a crime as well in England, also known as “self-slaughter”. Punishments for attempted suicide were harsh, consequences for successful suicide even worse. Your family would be dishonoured and your body wouldn’t receive a proper Christian burial. Ophelia’s death in Hamlet is a typical case for Elizabethan times where circumstances of her death were not quite clear and it had to be decided whether she had died in a tragic accident or “willingly”. Read more on the following websites:

<http://elsinore.ucsc.edu/burial/burialSuicide.html>

Funeral arrangements

<http://elsinore.ucsc.edu/burial/burialFirst.html>

**Task:** With a partner, explore the gravedigger scene (links and text) and Ophelia’s funeral scene (Act V Scene i). Collect hints as to whether Ophelia has committed suicide or not. Hold trials in groups of 5 (one being the judge, two the jury, and one person for and one against

suicide) and argue your cases to decide how Ophelia should be buried. Discuss your verdicts in class.

## **Lesson 7: Madness**

### Insanity and Lunatics in Shakespeare's time

Read more about it on the following page:

<http://treatingmadness.weebly.com/>

#### **Task:**

With help of the play *Hamlet* (and the link above) work out, what madness meant in Shakespeare's time: What was madness, what caused it, and how did society deal with insanity?

Compare your results with the term madness as we/you would explain it today. In your opinion: When would you call someone lunatic? What differences in meaning can you find between the 16<sup>th</sup> century - "madness" and nowadays' "madness"?

### Hamlet's madness

The question whether Hamlet is mad or not arises again and again when analysing the play. Is Hamlet only pretending lunacy to cause confusion or is he truly mad? Some ambiguous scenes in the play still raise issues and frequently lead to critical debates.

Before looking at a possible answer to this question, discuss in class/small groups, if there are arguments for/against the assumption that Hamlet is mad.

**Task:** Form mini groups of about 3 – 4 people. Each group will look at one of the main characters of the play and discuss how this character would assess Hamlet's behaviour. In your character's view:

Does Hamlet's behaviour imitate real lunacy?

And if so – When and why? How do you justify your decision?

Or if not so – Why not? How do you justify your decision?

A possible answer can be found here:

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/hamlet/antichamlet.html>

### Ophelia's madness

Even more likely is the assumption that Ophelia is going mad over the course of the play.

Her development in the play is a very tragic one, full of suffering and pain.

She is too young and innocent to cope with the tremendous events and feelings that descend upon her. The corrupt people around her, Hamlet's tenderness that turned into brutality after she refused his love letters and finally the death of her father Polonius – these events distress her so much, that the sorrow drives her into suicide.

She is suffering quietly, not able to defend herself. Especially Hamlet, being her first love, causes her so much pain – and in the end even murders her father. She assures herself that Hamlet must have gone mad, to have an explanation for herself why he has become so harsh.

Ophelia's relation to Hamlet:

Hamlet: [...] I did love you once.

Ophelia: Indeed, my, lord, you made me believe so.

Hamlet: You should not have believed me [...] I loved you not.

Ophelia: I was the more deceived.

Act III, Scene i, verse 115-121

### Ophelia:

Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!—

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,

Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state,

The glass of fashion and the mould of form,

Th' observed of all observers, quite, quite down!

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,

That sucked the honey of his music vows,

Now see that noble and most sovereign reason

Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;

That unmatched form and feature of blown youth

Blasted with ecstasy. Oh, woe is me,

T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

Act III, Scene i, verse 150-162

The circumstances of Ophelia's death are rather mysterious:

Gertrude:

There, on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds  
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke,  
When down her weedy trophies and herself  
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,  
And mermaid-like a while they bore her up,  
Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds  
As one incapable of her own distress,  
Or like a creature native and indued  
Unto that element. [...]

Act V, Scene i, verse 171-179

Gertrude states that Ophelia fell into the water when she was trying to hang her "fantastic garlands" on a tree and one of the branches broke. But instead of trying to escape out of the water, she sang until finally the weight of the water seeping into her thick and heavy clothes pulled her under the water and she drowned.

**Task:** Imagine being Ophelia. Write a diary entry/farewell letter in which you express your sorrow and despair after the death of Polonius. How do you feel about the fact that your love Hamlet murdered your beloved father?

And: Why do you want to drown yourself? Was it intentionally or by accident? Describe your frame of mind to clarify Ophelia's "insanity".

**Questions before/during the play**

Now that you have gotten a rough idea of what the play is about...

- Who is the hero/villain in this story?
- How could the play end? Who is going to win the duel?

What happens with the cup filled with poisoned wine which will be Claudius' second attempt to kill Hamlet? Who will survive this catastrophe and rule over Denmark?

- Will there be music? What kind of music could it be? At what points in the play would you use music?
- Will the characters be dressed in traditional Elizabethan clothing? Will they wear modern clothes? Or maybe something completely different?
- How do you imagine the stage setting? Will there be props, backdrops, etc?

- Will the characters be addressing the audience directly? At which points of the play (or plays in general) could that be possible or even useful?
- Some actors will be playing more than one role. How could they make them different (apart from costume)?

**Tasks:** Draw a sketch of the stage as you would set it for a scene in *Hamlet* OR pick three characters from the play and draw their costumes OR pick three different characters and imagine the way they are standing, speaking, and moving. Present your work in front of your classmates and explain your creative decisions.

### **Lesson 8: After the play**

Concerning the performance:

- How did you like the performance/costumes/pros/lighting/etc.?
- What did you like best/did not like? Is everything as you expected? What would you have done differently?
- How believable were the characters?
- Did the actors' performance change your perception of the characters?
- According to the performance, is Hamlet mad? What made Ophelia go mad?

Concerning the play (in general)

- Is the ghost real? Who/what is the ghost?
- What was Claudius' motivation to kill his older brother? Why did he seek to get Hamlet killed as well?
- How does Hamlet feel about having killed Polonius? How does he deal with that murder?
- How does Hamlet feel about/deal with Ophelia's death?
- What would have happened if Hamlet had not believed the ghost?