

# HAMLET



## STUDENT WORKSHEET

### HAMLET

By William Shakespeare

*Hamlet* is Shakespeare's most famous play and is the most performed play in the world. People say that there is a performance of *Hamlet* taking place somewhere in the world every single minute of every single day!

*Hamlet* is a tragedy about a young Prince (Hamlet) whose life goes wrong after he learns that his father (King Hamlet) was murdered by his Uncle (Claudius). After he seeks revenge, he accidentally kills his girlfriend's father and then kills himself.

Written over 400 years ago, there are lots of things we can still learn from *Hamlet*. In this lesson you are going to discover just some of them!

### OVERVIEW OF THE PLAY

**Key themes:** Mortality, madness, ghosts, the supernatural and revenge

**Key characters:**

- Hamlet: The tragic hero of the play. Hamlet is Prince of Denmark and the son of Queen Gertrude and the late King Hamlet. Bitter and cynical and full of hatred for his Uncle Claudius.
- King Hamlet: The ghost of Hamlet's father who appears in front of Hamlet and claims to have been murdered by Claudius.
- Claudius: The villain of the play. The new King of Denmark and second husband of Queen Gertrude.
- Gertrude: The Queen of Denmark who has recently married Claudius following the death of her husband (King Hamlet).
- Polonius - Ophelia's father and Lord of the King's court.
- Ophelia - Hamlet's sweet, innocent and obedient girlfriend who goes insane with grief and drowns herself after Hamlet murders her father.
- Laertes - Ophelia's brother.



# SHAKESPEARE FOR LIFE

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## SYNOPSIS

The ghost of Hamlet's dad visits him and tells him that his uncle Claudius, who is now King, was responsible for his murder. Hamlet doesn't know what to do to avenge him and so pretends to be insane.

To test whether Claudius murdered his dad, Hamlet decides to put on a play about a man who kills his brother to become King. Claudius is shocked and angry, which confirms to Hamlet that the ghost was telling the truth: that Claudius definitely killed his dad.

Understandably, Hamlet then gets angry with his mum Gertrude for marrying the man who killed his dad / her ex-husband King Hamlet. Thinking he is Claudius, Hamlet then mistakenly kills Polonius (his girlfriend's dad).

Ophelia is devastated to learn that her boyfriend has killed her dad, goes insane with grief and then kills herself.

Claudius then convinces Ophelia's brother Laertes to kill Hamlet and prepares some poison to kill him with. Laertes and Hamlet then fight and both are wounded.

To make matters worse, Hamlet's mum then accidentally drinks the poison that Claudius had prepared for Hamlet.

After seeing his mum die, Hamlet then kills Claudius.

Hamlet then drinks the remainder of the poison and kills himself.

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## 1 ACTIVITY 1: SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

There are many expressions from *Hamlet* that we still use today. Look at the expressions below and discuss what you think they mean.

1. In my mind's eye
2. In my heart of hearts
3. Own flesh and blood
4. There's the rub
5. Sick at heart

Now match them to their correct definition:

- A. here is the difficulty
- B. in one's imagination
- C. in one's inmost feelings
- D. depressed, sad, dejected
- E. your family or relations

## ANSWERS

- 1 ..... 3 ..... 5 .....  
2 ..... 4 .....

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you know any similar expressions like these in your own language?
- In *your mind's eye* how do you see your future?
- In *your heart of hearts* how long do you think it will take you to learn English?
- Tell your partner about your *own flesh and blood*.
- Learning English takes time and *there's the rub!* What do you find most difficult about learning English?

## 2 ACTIVITY 2: SPEAK SHAKESPEARE!

Below are two extracts of the same speech spoken by *Hamlet* in the Macmillan Graded Reader.

One is the original as written by Shakespeare and the other has been adapted for language students.

### ORIGINAL

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals; and yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me; no, nor woman neither, but you're smiling, so you must think they do.

Form = shape

Express = impressive

Apprehension = understanding

Paragon = best example of

Quintessence = a pure example

### ADAPTATION

The beauties of the world mean nothing to me.  
And man, the finest work of God's creation,  
Is nothing more than dust. I see you smiling,  
But women do not please me either.



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