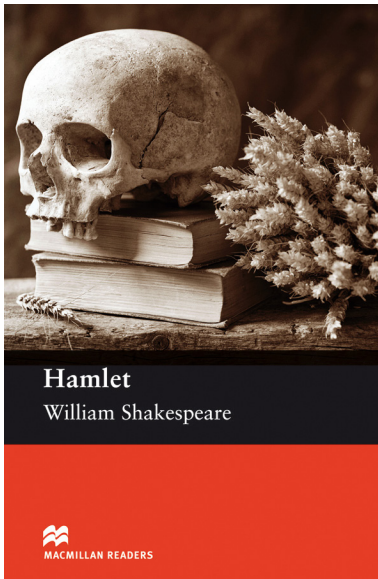


# HAMLET



By William Shakespeare



This lesson was inspired by the Macmillan Readers adaption of William Shakespeare's original playscript. The language has been adapted and graded to make it suitable for readers at Intermediate level. It also features extracts of key speeches from the original text along with explanatory notes, plus glossaries and exercises designed to reinforce understanding post reading.

The book is available with CD, as an audio book and as an eBook. Find out more here.

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## SHAKESPEARE FOR LIFE

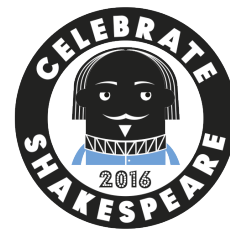
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# HAMLET



## TEACHER'S NOTES

### LESSON OVERVIEW

**Level:** Intermediate

**Length:** Approximately 40 minutes

**Language focus:** Expressions from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

**Learning objectives:** In this lesson students complete a series of tasks that will help them to build their vocabulary and speaking skills. Students will have the chance to:

- Gain an overview of the story of *Hamlet* and its characters
- Learn a series of expressions from the play still in use today
- Discuss ghosts and the supernatural and build related vocabulary
- Read, analyse and practise reciting a famous speech from the play

### CONTENTS

- Activity 1: Shakespeare's Language
- Activity 2: Speak Shakespeare

#### Additional Activities:

- Themed Discussion
- Vocabulary Task



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# HAMLET



## 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.

## 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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# HAMLET



## 1 ACTIVITY 1: SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

Use the information above to introduce *Hamlet* to your class. You can either read out the synopsis or choose to explain the play in your own words. Ask your students what they know about the play, if anything.

You could mention that much of the plot of *The Lion King* was based on *Hamlet* and that there are direct similarities in the characters:

- Proud King Mufasa = King Hamlet
- Evil brother Scar = Claudius
- Prince Simba, the rightful heir to the throne = Hamlet

Hand out the student worksheet and ask students to complete this task, either in pairs or individually.

After completing the task you may wish to use the discussion questions to prompt further discussion.

### TASK

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 try to match them to the correct definitions:

- 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

(Answer key: 1B, 2C, 3E, 4A, 5D)

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you have any similar expressions 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?



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# HAMLET



## 2 ACTIVITY 2: SPEAK SHAKESPEARE

Get your class talking with these extracts from our *Hamlet* Graded Reader.

- Tell students that they're going to read two versions of the same speech, spoken by Hamlet in Act 2 Scene 2. Read both versions to them and then ask them to discuss the meaning in pairs or small groups.
- You could then ask students to recite the adapted speech to each other in pairs, with as much emotion and meaning as they can to convey Hamlet's feelings.
- As an extra challenge, you could ask them to re-write the speech in modern English as a text message or tweet.

### 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.

Reason = ability to think

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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# HAMLET



## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

### ★ THEMED DISCUSSION

Explain to students that Shakespeare lived in the Middle Ages when much of society believed in ghosts and the supernatural. Ghosts appear in several of his plays, including Hamlet, where the ghost of his father (King Hamlet) appears. There are times when the reader cannot be certain if Hamlet is actually seeing a real ghost or whether he is imagining it.

Ask your students to work in small groups and discuss the following questions. You could then ask each group to share their views (and/or spooky stories!) with the whole class afterwards.

- Do you believe in ghosts?
- What would you do if you ever saw a ghost?
- Have you ever seen a ghost?
- If you were a ghost who and where would you haunt?
- Can you think of any other famous ghosts from literature or films?

### ★ WORD STORM

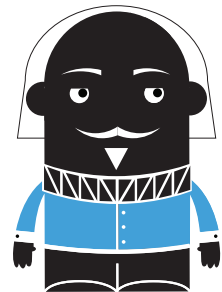
Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to brainstorm relating to happiness and the word happy. This could include expressions such as happy-go-lucky.

You could split the class into two large groups or smaller groups and assign happy to one and sad to the other.

For a more creative challenge, you could ask students to create an illustrated mindmap or poster featuring all of the words and expressions.

We'd love to share your students' work on the Macmillan Readers website, so please send photos of your displays to: [social.media@macmillan.com](mailto:social.media@macmillan.com)

Send us your posters and we'll display them on our website!



## RELATED RESOURCES

- [Shakespeare for Life video 2: Hamlet](#)
- [Hamlet characters infographic](#)
- [Onestopenglish Lesson Plan: Cinematic Listening and 'To be or not to be'](#)



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