SHAKESPEARE & COMPANY

William Shakespeare's

HAMLET

Directed by Eleanor Holdridge

Set Designer..... ED CHECK
Lighting Designer.....LES DICKERT
Costume Designer..... JESSICA FORD
Sound Designer..... SCOTT KILLIAN
Stage Manager .....NICOLE BOUCLIER

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HAMLET – GUIDEBOOK 2008

Notes from the Director, Eleanor Holdridge

Notes from Kevin Coleman, Director of Education, Shakespeare & Company

Preparing Students for Shakespeare in Performance

Our Touring Production: Hamlet, 2008

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDEBOOK

Hamlet is a complex play. This guidebook is not intended to simplify it. Rather, we hope it inspires, provokes and engages you and your students to look into the play's richness and complexity in new ways. We offer some background information and some discoveries we've made in our research and rehearsals, but we aren't offering any definitive interpretations or answers.

The primary sources we used in preparing this guide include: *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Folio*, pub. 1623; *the Riverside Shakespeare*; *The Meaning of Shakespeare* by Harold C. Goddard. Other works are cited at the end of each section.

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hamlet is perhaps the most incredibly tortured, intelligent and facile character Shakespeare ever conceived. Much has been made of his "tragic flaw" and his lack of action. But what draws me to the play is his relentless and very active pursuit of self-knowledge and his rigorous exploration of what it is to be human. His is a mind not content to live within the form of his given society or even the form of his own play.

A thinking man with a well of conscience, exploring in absolute every ramification of every decision, Hamlet would perhaps make a terrible ruler. Claudius and Gertrude, as they quickly and concisely make decisions on domestic and foreign policy and homeland security often causing the deaths of innocent souls, are perhaps stronger leaders. But which is better for the country, and which is better for the conscience of the society, which is better for the heart of the individual? Shakespeare's questions, posed over 400 years ago seem to be at the heart of our continuing human debate.

Hamlet is a man who is struggling not only with his conscience, honor, personal vengeance for the death of his father, but also a man trying to discover his political and personal responsibilities in the world. The questions are eternal. Do we take revenge or seek another course? And if we follow our own vengeance and sense of personal retribution, what is the outcome and how do we take responsibility for what we've done?

I believe that one of the greatest achievements of Shakespeare's great art is that he poses the essential ontological questions not in a removed and intellectual manner, but with all the power and messiness of human emotion, wedding the probings of the human mind with the longings of the human heart.

Although the design team and I have conceived a production that centers the play in the electrical synapse impulses of Hamlet's dying brain, creating flashes of memory or imagination that codify a life, it is in the passion and heart with which we are most concerned. Although Hamlet could be a terrible king, a bad boyfriend, a quixotic friend, a sullen and brooding son, he is also a man who wants to do what is right, to live up to the dictates of his father, and yet be true to himself. A very human being.

Eleanor Holdridge

NOTES FROM KEVIN COLEMAN THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:

In his essay, "The World of *Hamlet,*" Professor Maynard Mack observed that *Hamlet* is a play full of questions. The play begins with a question, "Who's there?" and asks many more questions, both mundane and profound. "How is it that the clouds still hang on you?" "Must I remember?" "What is it, Ophelia, he hath said to you?" "Why, what should be the fear?" "What do you think of me?" "Am I a coward?" "Where is your father? "Lady, shall I lie in your lap?" "Is't possible a young maid's wits should be as mortal as an old man's life?" And the most famous line in the play, of course, names one of the most essential questions: "To be or not to be…"

While Shakespeare raises an unparalleled number of questions in this play, he as usual provides little in the way of answers. He places us—the audience, the witnesses, the readers—in the position of silent *participants* in the drama when he bombards us with these questions. Questions are potent. Questions provoke us, engage us, put us on the spot, call us to action and pull us up short. Shakespeare's questions hook us and pull us deeper into the play, and into ourselves.

Hamlet is a play- possibly *the* play- that speaks to us on the most personal levels. It explores the most profound questions that we wrestle with throughout our lives: Who am I? What must I do? How must I act? The answers we discover or invent for ourselves become the occasion or benchmark of our maturity. One can appreciate, become inspired by and glean insight into this play— to different depths as we mature, yet we remain unable to pluck out the heart of this play. It seems to change—even as we change—between encounters. And while we feel a close affinity to this play—oftentimes especially this play—and "know" how it should be presented, the trap becomes in thinking there is no more or different insight into it than our own.

There are many ways to encounter a play: as a student for the first time, a teacher for the hundredth, an audience member, an actor, a director, etc. Shakespeare's play conjures a entirely new and changing imaginative world for us to discover. In that spirit of adventure and discovery, we chose to borrow a term from the world of travel, and offer you this guidebook. It has been a pleasure to work on this project. We hope our efforts help to further your discoveries.

Kevin G. Coleman
Director of Education

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE

How can I prepare my students?

Give them a sense of the story – The plots of most of Shakespeare's plays are usually laid out simply and sequentially, and can be readily detailed beforehand. His plays are not murder mysteries that depend on elaborate twists or surprise revelations to keep the excitement high. It doesn't spoil the experience to know before hand that Ophelia goes mad and drowns, Romeo and Juliet die, Prince Hal will become King Henry V, or to know that in his comedies, the lovers almost always get married in the end. In Shakespeare, it doesn't detract to "give away" the ending. Shakespeare's plays are language and character-driven. The audience or reader becomes engaged by the individual characters, their thoughts, feelings, relationships and journeys. If we know the plot ahead of time, we can usually quiet our minds and focus on the *who* and *why* - the characters' interaction and the piercingly beautiful language.

Introduce them to the characters – Before the play starts, it's useful if the audience is able to remember who the characters are, and therefore curious about what and *why* the characters do what they do, their *development* and *interpretation*. Since most of Shakespeare's plays have a rather long list of characters, they either become a feast of familiar friends, or a jumble of confusing strangers. Having some pre-understanding of the complicated relationships between Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, Ophelia, Laertes, Horatio, Polonius and the rest, we are able to be affected by deeper meanings and themes in the play. For all the characters in any play of Shakespeare's, it is helpful to know what social status they have, degree of nobility or social position and what power (civil, political or religious) they enjoy.

Get them excited about the language – This preparation is probably the most difficult to do beforehand. Shakespeare's language is different from that of movie scripts, song lyrics, newspapers or novels. The language is poetic, so it can involve unusual sentence structures and syntax. At the same time, the language is also inherently dramatic, which makes it more readily accessible and alive in performance. While most people think of Shakespeare's language as 400 years older than the English we speak today, it is much more appropriate to think of Shakespeare's language as 400 years *younger* than what we speak now. Consequently, it can be presented as more vibrant, exciting and daring. It is a language replete with images. Shakespeare delights and nearly overwhelms our modern ear with a myriad of images that surprise, delight, inspire or even startle us. What doesn't work so well is if his language constantly confuses us.

Discuss the qualities of live theatrical performance – It's usually helpful for students who don't attend theater regularly to take a moment to reflect on the nature of live performance. Because we're so used to other forms of entertainment, it can be surprising to remember that everything happens in real time, in the actual moment of performance, and that each performance is unique. At Shakespeare & Company, we celebrate these aspects of live performances, placing great emphasis on the relationship between the actors and the audience. Our actors look directly at the audience, speak to them directly –

sometimes even ask them for a response and to participate actively in the creation of the play. There is constant acknowledgement that this is a play, being performed in the moment and in the presence of people who have come to hear and see it – in other words – the actors will continually dance between the "real" reality of being on a stage in front of people watching, and the "imaginative" reality of say, Denmark in some distant past. We also ask students to reflect on their role as audience. Rather than focusing on "theatre etiquette," we invite students to participate as an engaged and supportive audience. When an audience is actively attentive and responsive, they share in the creation and success of the performance. It follows too that the actors are aware of this and inspired to give more generously and bravely in their performance. Great audiences help to create great performances.

OUR TOURING PRODUCTION

What you will be seeing is a ten-actor touring production of *Hamlet,* either the full 3 hour version or a sixty or ninety minute presentation of key scenes from the play. While this model of theatre - a small cast of actors playing multiple roles and traveling - has a long history in various parts of Europe and England stretching from the Middle Ages, we can easily imagine this model being employed from the earliest beginnings of theatre. Touring productions would leave London and take to the road for various reasons; the plague, political and religious suppression, the winter weather, or financial need. As a resident of Stratford-upon-Avon, a town whose location made it important in commerce and travel, it is very likely that Shakespeare himself was exposed to touring productions as he was growing up. While there is no hard evidence to prove this – or to propose an early fascination with theatre and performances – it is more reasonable to imagine it being true from the subsequent path of his life, than to reject it because of the absence of documented proof.

Elizabethan actors often traveled with reduced versions of longer Shakespeare plays. Scholars are now convinced that the plays in performance were always edited and shorter than the versions that got the approval of the Master of Revels, or that we read or study in literature classes as the published versions. For example, *Hamlet*, which could take more than four hours to read aloud, most likely was only two hours in performance. Our two and a half hour performance of *Hamlet* is similarly edited. A bit shorter than what the Elizabethans probably heard, this version is created to focus on Hamlet's inner struggle to find out who he is and what kind of human he will be.

Shakespeare's plays are essentially about language. Elizabethan audiences went to "hear a play" – their expression. Today we go to "see a movie," "watch TV," or describe ourselves as "sports spectators" – our expressions. Elizabethan audiences particularly enjoyed the language of the plays, and this appreciation demanded plays in which the language was profoundly dramatic.

One final thing to keep in mind. In the Elizabethan playhouses, the actors would address the audience directly – even eliciting responses when needed. There was minimal aesthetic separation between the actors onstage and the members of the audience. Shakespeare goes out of his way to acknowledge the audience and to keep bringing their awareness to the fact that they are watching a play. This is a style of theatre that is aesthetically very different from our own.

THE CHARACTERS IN THIS PRODUCTION

Who's Who in Hamlet

 King Hamlet is dead before the play begins, and the ghost that appears Horatio, and Hamlet comes in the shape of him. In the play, King Hamlet is most often remembered by his son, Prince Hamlet. He was poisoned while sleeping in his orchard, but only Prince Hamlet learns of this.

 The Ghost appears in the likeness of King Hamlet. It tells Prince Hamlet that he was murdered. It urges Hamlet to revenge. The ghost is also seen by Horatio, but Hamlet is the only person to whom it speaks. When it appears to Hamlet in his mother's closet (i.e. bedroom), she does not see it.

 Queen Gertrude was wife to King Hamlet and Queen of Denmark. She is Prince Hamlet's mother. Shortly after her husband's sudden death, she marries his brother Claudius. Through this marriage, Claudius becomes king. Gertrude is accidentally poisoned at the end of the play.

 Prince Hamlet is away at the University of Wittenberg when his father dies. He comes home for the funeral, which is shortly followed by his mother's wedding to his uncle. A ghost appears to him in the likeness of his father, claiming he was murdered and urging Hamlet to revenge. Ophelia is urged by her brother and father to be wary of Hamlet's advances. Hamlet remains distract. His Queen Mother and Claudius ask some childhood friends to find out what's troubling him and report back to them. Claudius decides to send him to England. Hamlet stabs through a tapestry and kills his girlfriend's father who had been eavesdropping on his mother and himself. En route to England, he discovers a plot against his life, but escapes with the help of some pirates. Upon returning to Denmark he learns of his girlfriend's death. He is killed by Laertes with a sword during a fencing match and in turn kills Laertes and Claudius for poisoning his mother.

 King Claudius secretly kills his brother, King Hamlet, marries his wife and assumes the throne in Denmark. Fearing discovery, he sends Prince Hamlet to England, secretly ordering his execution. At the end of the play, he is killed by Hamlet.

 Polonius is King Claudius' advisor at court. He's not above spying on people, and even sends a servant to France to spy on Laertes. He's stabbed through a tapestry while eavesdropping on Hamlet and Gertrude.

 Ophelia is Polonius' daughter and Hamlet's girlfriend. She spends much of the play with other people telling her what to do. When her father is killed by Hamlet, she goes mad and unwittingly drowns.

 Laertes is Ophelia's brother and son to Polonius. He spends most of the play in France, but returns to avenge his father's death. He discovers his sister has gone mad,

and shortly after, hears she has drowned. He fences with Hamlet, and dies of a wound from a sword he had poisoned intending to use it on Hamlet.

Horatio is Hamlet's friend from Wittenberg University. A stranger at court, he is the only person Hamlet confides in. At the end of the play, Horatio is left to tell Hamlet's story.

 Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Hamlet's two friends from his youth. King Claudius uses them to discover the cause of Hamlet's distraction. While Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are on the king's business of escorting Hamlet to England, Hamlet is kidnapped by pirates. They sail on, arrive in England, and are executed there by the king, having unwittingly carried the warrant for their deaths.

Osric is a courier.

Fortinbras is a Norwegian prince whose father was killed in single combat by King Hamlet. Pressured not to attack Denmark, he's given permission to pass through Denmark to make war on Poland. On his return, he arrives at Elsinore in the final scene. With the entire Danish royal family dead, Denmark is left to Fortinbras. (This character does not appear in our edited version.)

Also appearing in the Play:
A traveling player or actor
A gravedigger
A courtier

 Indicates the character dies before the end of the play.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Jason Aspery	Hamlet
Kenuan Bentley	Guildenstern/Osric
Johnny Lee Davenport	King Hamlet/s Ghost/ Player/ A Gravedigger
Nigel Gore	Claudius
Dennis Krausnick	Polonius/A Priest
Kevin O'Donnell	Laertes
Tina Packer	Gertrude
Lizzie Raetz	Ophelia
Alex Svronsky	Rosenkrantz/ Fortinbras
Jake Waid	Horatio

A QUICK PLOT SYNOPSIS OF HAMLET

"Stand and unfold yourself"

Shakespeare starts the play in the middle of a very cold night. Bernardo, a Danish soldier guarding the castle at Elsinore, relieves a fellow soldier on guard, Francisco. For two nights Bernardo and another soldier, Marcellus have seen a ghost while on their watch. They've asked Horatio, a scholar who's returned from the University at Wittenberg, to join them and to confront it. As Bernardo describes their encounter, the ghost appears again, and we discover that it resembles the recently deceased King Hamlet, dressed for war. It stalks away without responding.

The director of this production has chosen to omit the scene and start the play with a montage of lines from the play as if they are snatches of memory in Hamlet's dying brain. If you listen carefully, you can see the opening words of the play overlapping with key lines that pose the fundamental questions of the play.

Shakespeare's play begins with the question, "Who's there?" and the reply, "Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself." Bernardo and Francisco, the guards on watch, can't see one another because it is the middle of the night. Before electric lighting, the middle of the night on the battlements would have been quite dark. A performance at Shakespeare's Globe playhouse would have occurred in the afternoon in bright daylight. Without electrical lighting it was up to the playwright, the actors and the imagination of the audience to create a nighttime scene.

"You are the most immediate to our throne"

Inside the castle the following day, Claudius, the dead King Hamlet's brother, addresses an assembly. (In this production it is presented as a speech on a balcony to the public.) Although Denmark has been in mourning for King Hamlet's death, Claudius has become King and married the recently widowed Queen Gertrude, his sister-in-law. Claudius thanks everyone who has "freely gone with this affair along." Alone with his family, Claudius dispatches ambassadors to the new King of Norway, who is Young Fortinbras' uncle. He then grants Laertes permission to return to school in France, but beseeches Hamlet not to return to school in Wittenberg. Queen Gertrude persuades Hamlet to stay.

Most of the world's monarchies observe the custom of primogeniture (the eldest male child succeeds to the throne of the previous ruler). In earlier historical references to punishments, shorter life spans, constant warfare and greater

political instability compelled the need for a mature, experienced male to succeed to the throne. Transitioning from one custom to the other was fraught with conflict. See Shakespeare's King John, Richard II and Richard III. In the strictest interpretation of Christian law, it would have been considered incestuous for a woman to marry her brother-in-law. There are historical references to punishments for just such a crime. Exceptions were generally made for royal families, especially when the stability of the state was in question. By marrying Gertrude, Claudius provided stability and continuity. It was a good strategy politically.

"Young Fortinbras, holding a weak supposal of our worth…"

We discover that Denmark is preparing for war. King Fortinbras of Norway had previously challenged King Hamlet to single combat, with the winner seizing the lands of the loser. Not only did King Hamlet kill King Fortinbras, he seized his lands, which should have been inherited by his son, Young Fortinbras. We further learn that Young Fortinbras has raised an army of mercenaries to recover what his father had forfeited.

There was no real Fortinbras in Norwegian history. There are, however, historical parallels. The Danish King Canute defeated the Norwegian King Olaf II, whose son Magnus tried to regain the kingdom his father lost (Asimov, p. 84). Fortinbras' name is French and means 'strong in arms.' It was customary for early Scandinavian kings to be known by some distinguishing characteristic, for example, Sven Forked-beard, Harold Bluetooth, Eric Bloodaxe (Asimov, p. 84).

"But break my heart for I must hold my tongue"

Alone, Hamlet shares his thoughts and feelings with the audience. Not only has his father recently died, but his mother has married his uncle with unusual haste. The time interval, by Hamlet's confused report, is somewhat ambiguous. But Hamlet's emotional response is not.

Modern theatrical practice assumes that in soliloquies, characters talk to themselves. This was not so in Shakespeare's time. In the Elizabethan playhouse, Hamlet would be surrounded by more than 1000 audience members sitting close to the stage. Of course he speaks directly to the audience. For an Elizabethan, it would be ridiculous for the actor and the audience to pretend otherwise, or for the audience to be ignored .

"What make you from Wittenberg?"

Hamlet is interrupted by Horatio. He tells Hamlet of his encounter with the ghost of his father. Hamlet questions them closely, and asks them to keep their encounter a secret. He agrees to join him that night to speak to the ghost, whose presence indicates all is not well.

Founded in 1502, the University of Wittenberg became the center for humanist thought and the protestant reformation. Martin Luther was called to teach there in 1508, and in 1517 he nailed his 95 theses to the door of the cathedral church. In literature, Wittenberg is also where the powerful magician and alchemist Doctor Faustus studied.

"His greatness weighed, his will is not his own"

Ready to depart for France, Laertes bids farewell to his sister, Ophelia. He advises her not to lose her heart to Hamlet, whose affections she is encouraged not to trust. He expresses concern about her honor, if she behaves credulously in response to Hamlet's attentions. She agrees to follow her brother's cautions, but challenges him to practice what he preaches. Their father, Polonius, enters and hurries Laertes aboard the ship, after giving him copious advice. He then asks Ophelia what she and her brother had been talking about. He is also concerned about Hamlet's intentions towards her. He forbids Ophelia from seeing or communicating with Hamlet, and she promises to obey.

Royal marriages were often arranged, and had little to do with love. If countries were at war, a marriage could be part of the peace treaty (see Shakespeare's Henry V). A marriage could also forge a valuable alliance among families struggling for power in civil war (see Shakespeare's Richard III). During much of Elizabeth I's reign, she endured great pressure to make a politically expedient marriage. England's King Edward VIII abdicated his throne in the 1930s to marry the woman he loved, an American divorcee who was considered an unsuitable queen. Edward's brother George became King, and George's descendants are the current royal family of Britain.

"Something is rotten in the state of Denmark."

Hamlet joins Horatio on the battlements, and shortly after the ghost appears. It will not speak, but beckons Hamlet to follow. Marcellus and Horatio try to prevent Hamlet from following, Hamlet threatens them, and exits after the ghost. Marcellus and Horatio decide to disobey Hamlet, and set out in chase of him. Horatio makes a prophetic observation.

As Hamlet waits for the ghost, he expounds on human flaws and their subsequent impact on the world. Hamlet's opinions echo Aristotle's theory of Hamartia, or "tragic flaw," which he had probably read about at Wittenberg. Contemporary scholarship has retranslated Aristotle's "tragic flaw" to "tragic error" (Saccio, lecture 26). Elizabethan Catholics believed that ghosts were souls suffering in

purgatory, who had to atone for the sins they committed before entering heaven. It was also believed that ghosts would return to earth for help in this endeavor, and it was an act of charity to help them.

"To put an antic disposition on"

Once they are alone, the ghost reveals to Hamlet that while everyone believes he died from a serpent sting, his brother Claudius secretly poisoned him while he slept. The ghost exits, asking Hamlet to remember him. Hamlet resolves to avenge his father's death. Horatio and Marcellus enter, and Hamlet swears them to secrecy. He goes on to mention to them that he may even feign madness.

In pre-Christian times, lunatics were believed to be touched by the gods. They were considered special (Asimov p. 106). In early Christian times, lunatics were often thought to be possessed by evil spirits, as a result of their sinfulness. They were treated horribly. Today, insanity is more a legal term than a religious one. An antic was also another name for the Fool, whose function was, in part, to speak the truth.

"This is the very ecstasy of love"

A very frightened Ophelia enters and tells her father about a distressing encounter with Hamlet in her private quarters. Polonius concludes that Hamlet's behavior is the result of a kind of ecstatic madness caused by his being in love with Ophelia. Polonius leaves with Ophelia to inform the king.

Some Elizabethans thought of love as both a profound and dangerous experience, akin to a disease to which cures could be applied. For example, in Shakespeare's comedy As You Like It, Rosalind says, "Love is merely a madness, and I tell you deserves as well a dark house and a whip as surely as madmen do; and the reason why they are not so punished and cured is that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too." While Shakespeare's characters may have held this belief, they weren't necessarily speaking for the playwright. Shakespeare's thoughts about love were more complex and much more conflicted.

"More matter, with less art"

Claudius and Gertrude welcome Hamlet's school friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to Elsinore. They ask for their help to investigate the cause of Hamlet's uncharacteristic behavior. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern agree and exit. Polonius enters and announces that he has found the cause of Hamlet's lunacy. He then reports that the source of Hamlet's madness is his rejected love for Ophelia. He convinces Claudius to hide with him behind his arras to witness the next encounter between his daughter and Hamlet to prove his belief.

The art of rhetoric was very important to the Elizabethans. They studied it at school. They had heated debates about what made a good argument, and a good person. Some modeled themselves after the ancient Roman orator, Cicero, who would use words so beautifully and skillfully that he was unusually persuasive in his long speeches. Others preferred a more direct, substantive approach to speaking. In his Advancements of Learning (1605), Francis Bacon stated that the first distemper of learning was "when men study words and not matter." While Polonius claims that "Brevity is the soul of wit," he doesn't seem to follow this belief himself.

"My excellent good friends"

Hamlet wanders in reading a book. Polonius and Hamlet have a curious conversation and then Polonius leaves. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter and Hamlet gets them to admit they have been sent to visit him. They announce the coming of some travelling players (in this production there is only one actor or player), who are touring the countryside because of competition in the city from a company of child actors.

Years before Shakespeare produced Hamlet, his and other acting companies faced serious competition from companies of children, who performed adult roles in satirical comedies. For a time, the children became all the rage in London, and posed a financial threat to the adult companies. The children's companies eventually disbanded.

" 'Twas Aeneas' tale to Dido" *

Polonius enters with the players (in this production only one actor or player), whose work Hamlet has seen and enjoyed before. Hamlet asks the players to perform a speech from the famous story of King Priam's slaughter during the fall of Troy. The speech includes both the slaying of Priam at the hands of Pyrrhus, and the reaction of his wife Hecuba. Hamlet again welcomes the players to Elsinore and asks them to prepare "The Murder of Gonzago" for a performance before the court. He adds that he'd like them to include a speech that he'll write for the occasion. Note that in this production the Player is played by the same actor as Hamlet's father's ghost to emphasize the different aspects of Hamlet's dad.

Aeneas was a Trojan hero who survived the war with the Greeks. After ten years, the Greeks gave up hope of conquering the city by direct attack. They built a giant hollow horse and filled it with their best soldiers. The rest of the Greek army pretended to surrender and sail away. The Trojans were convinced to accept the wooden horse as a gift, an offering from the goddess Athena. At night, the Greek soldiers emerged from the horse, and opened the gates of the city to the

rest of their army. Troy was destroyed. After the war, Aeneas traveled and had wonderful adventures on his way to founding Rome. (see Virgil's The Aeneid).

"The devil hath power to assume a pleasing shape"

Left alone, Hamlet compares the player's acting ability and sense of commitment to his own performance and inability to take action against Claudius. Hamlet resolves to test the ghost's story of King Hamlet's murder by watching Claudius respond to the enactment of a similar story performed by the players, (*The Murder of Gonzago*.).

While Elizabethan Catholics believed that ghosts were souls in Purgatory who had not yet made it to Heaven, Protestants didn't believe in Purgatory. Ghosts were therefore either good spirits coming from Heaven (a very rare occurrence), or evil spirits sent from Hell. These evil spirits took the form of a loved one, to lure the people who saw them to damnation (Saccio, lecture 25).

"He does confess he feels himself distract"

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern brief Claudius and Gertrude on their encounter with Hamlet. They confess they can't discover the cause of his madness. They leave to try again. Polonius and Claudius ask Gertrude to leave, and set up an encounter between Hamlet and Ophelia, which they can observe without being seen.

Hamlet was not the first hero in western civilization to pretend to be mad. In the fourth century BC, Lucius Junius Brutus feigned madness to escape execution at the hands of King Tarquin, who had killed Brutus' father and brother. He later threw off the pretense of his madness, defeated Tarquin and helped establish the Roman Republic.

"Get thee to a nunnery"

Hamlet enters and speaks to the audience. His speech, beginning "To be or not to be" is one of the most famous speeches in all dramatic literature. Ophelia confronts Hamlet and attempts to return his love tokens, as her father had commanded her. Hamlet turns on her, confuses and berates her, berates himself, and demands that she go to a nunnery. (In this production, the actor playing Hamlet and the director have chosen to stress Hamlet's need to protect Ophelia from his sense of his own "rottenness" or "sullied flesh," with the idea that he could corrupt her if he continues on the course to revenge his fathers' murder.) Ophelia is left amazed and undone, and their relationship ends quite painfully for both.

A nunnery was a cloister for unmarried religious women. But there are several Elizabethan references which make it clear that during Shakespeare's lifetime,

the word, "nunnery" could also refer to a brothel. Hamlet's use of the word is ambiguous. So too is whether he knows he is being secretly observed in his scene with Ophelia.

"O'er which his melancholy sits on brood"

Claudius and Polonius emerge from hiding. Claudius no longer believes that Hamlet is merely lovesick, but secretive and dangerous. He decides to send him to England. Polonius assents, and advises Claudius to have Gertrude confront Hamlet later that evening about his behavior. Polonius will eavesdrop on their conversation. Ophelia says nothing.

For an Elizabethan, melancholy was more than just being depressed. It was the result of an imbalance in one of the body's four humors. It was observed closely and well documented in Timothy Bright's Treatise of Melancholy (1586). Bright noted that a melancholic has bad dreams, thinks of his house as a prison, and finds some relief when the wind is southerly (Jenkins p. 107). These symptoms are all referred to in the play.

"The play's the thing"

Hamlet gives the players acting advise, and talks about the function of theater. As the performance is about to begin, he asks Horatio to join him in observing Claudius' reaction and the player's enact the play. Polonius talks about having played Julius Caesar. Hamlet makes a few obscure remarks to the king, and speaks cruelly and obscenely to Ophelia, continuing to play his madness. In Shakespeare's original text, the players enact the story of Ganzago, so similar to the Ghost's version of the his own death at the hands of his brother. In this production, with only one player, Hamlet hands out scripts to his mother and uncle and they enact the play along with the player. Hamlet's remarks to the players are moved to advise his own family how to act in his play. The play begins and bears a remarkable resemblance to the events surrounding his father's murder as recounted by the ghost. Claudius storms out of the performance, bringing it to a chaotic end.

There was an added twist of meaning when Shakespeare's audience heard Polonius speak the lines, "I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed in the capitol. Brutus killed me." Shakespeare's Julius Caesar was written about a year before Hamlet, and may still have been in the company's repertoire. It's likely that the actor playing Polonius also played Julius Caesar, possibly John Heminges (Hibbard, p.4), and Shakespeare's leading actor, Richard Burbage, would have played both Hamlet and Brutus.

"When he is fit and seasoned for his passage"

Claudius orders Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to accompany Prince Hamlet to England. Polonius tells Claudius that Hamlet is on his way to visit Gertrude in her closet (her private chamber). He promises to spy on the visit and report back to Claudius.* Left alone, Claudius attempts to pray for forgiveness. Hamlet discovers him praying, decides to kill him, but postpones his revenge until a time when Claudius is more vulnerable to damnation. Claudius reveals that he is unable to experience forgiveness.

According to Christian beliefs, if a person died in the state of serious or mortal sin, their soul would be forever damned to Hell. If, however, a person died in the state of genuine repentance, their soul would go to Heaven. When the ghost speaks to Hamlet, he claims that he was murdered, "even in the blossoms of my sin." Hamlet reasons that if he kills Claudius in the act of praying, he'll send his soul to Heaven, which wouldn't constitute the best kind of revenge.

"Now Mother, what's the matter?"

Meanwhile, in Gertrude's chambers, Polonius urges Gertrude to be direct and forceful with Hamlet and then hides behind the arras to overhear their conversation. Hamlet enters and has a bitter exchange with his mother. When he hears someone behind the arras, he immediately stabs Polonius, not knowing whom he has killed. Almost immediately, Hamlet changes the subject, praising his father and chastising his mother for marrying Claudius. The ghost re-appears to remind Hamlet of his mission, and telling him to be merciful to Gertrude. Gertrude does not see the ghost and believes that Hamlet is mad (i.e. insane). Hamlet exits his mother's room, dragging Polonius' body with him.

Being summoned to his mother's bedroom (closet) must be unusual for the adult Hamlet, and he quickly turns the conversation from being confronted to confronting. The dead body of murdered Polonius remains throughout the scene, while Hamlet compares his father to his uncle in an effort to shame Gertrude. At this moment the Ghost appears to remind Hamlet of his task (revenge) and to stop his attack on Gertrude. This is one of the most famous scenes in Shakespeare.

"Now Hamlet, where's Polonius?"

Gertrude tells Claudius that Hamlet has slain Polonius. The King vows to ship Hamlet to England as soon as possible. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern find Hamlet and bring him to Claudius. Hamlet jokes about Polonius' death and reveals the whereabouts of his corpse. Claudius dispatches Hamlet to England. Left alone, Claudius reveals the secret to the audience that his letters to the King of England request the immediate death of Hamlet.

At the beginning of the eleventh century, when King Canute ruled Denmark, the Danish empire included Denmark, Norway, southern Sweden, and England. The

King of England would therefore feel some compulsion to carry out the King of Denmark's orders.

"All that fortune, death and danger dare" *

Hamlet, presumably on his way to the port to board a ship for England, encounters a Norwegian captain under Fortinbras' command. We discover that Fortinbras and his army are passing through Denmark on their way to invade Poland. Hamlet muses about the nature of war, and unfavorably compares himself and his predicament to Fortinbras and his purpose.

Another theory of the nature of suffering comes from the 6th century philosopher, Boethius, who was imprisoned for years before being executed. In his Consolation of Philosophy, he suggests that all human events are decided by the irrational strumpet goddess, Fortuna, the personification of unpredictable fate. It was a very influential book, translated into English by Alfred the Great, Geoffrey Chaucer and Elizabeth I. (Saccio, lecture 26)

"There's rosemary, that's for remembrance"

Her father slain by her now estranged lover, Ophelia sings songs and distributes flowers. Laertes, at the head of a mob, returns to avenge their father's death and unceremonious funeral. He witnesses his sister's breakdown. Claudius agrees to help Laertes seek revenge on Hamlet.

For Elizabethans, flowers were used as symbols to express unspoken thoughts and feelings. Rosemary is for remembrance, while pansies are for thoughts. Fennel symbolized flattery, columbines: thanklessness or cuckoldry, rue: repentance, daisies: dissembling, and violets: faithfulness.

"The star moves not but in his sphere"

Some pirates arrive in Elsinore and give Horatio letters from Hamlet. We learn that Hamlet is on his way back to Elsinore. Hamlet has also sent letters to the King, who subsequently plots Hamlet's death with Laertes. As they plan to kill Hamlet and make it appear an accident, Gertrude arrives with news that Ophelia has drowned. Laertes is comforted only by the thought of his revenge on Hamlet.

Although Copernicus published his theory of a heliocentric (the sun at the center) universe in 1543, in this reference to a star's orbit, Claudius assumes the geocentric (the earth at the center) universe proposed by Ptolemy in the 2nd century AD. Around the same time Hamlet was written, Giordano Bruno, an

Italian astronomer who subscribed to Copernicus' theory, was burned at the stake for the heresy of this teaching.

"A ministering angel shall my sister be"

Hamlet and Horatio enter, talk with a gravedigger and muse about mortality and decay. In this production, the grave digger is played by the same actor who plays the Ghost of Hamlet and the Player King, yet another aspect of Hamlet's father. A funeral procession enters, including the King, the Queen, and Laertes. A priest explains why the funeral service for Ophelia was abbreviated.* In this production, the same actor who plays Ophelia's dad, Polonius, also plays the priest, emphasizing the limited choices of Ophelia in death as in life. Hamlet discovers that the corpse is Ophelia and fights with Laertes.

If Ophelia's death were determined a suicide, she could not, according to the strictest Christian law, be buried in sanctified ground. Suicide was one of the mortal sins, as it demonstrated a complete loss of hope. Also, a suicide hadn't the time to repent his or her sins and receive absolution, so according to that same doctrine, she or he would be damned.

"There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow"

Hamlet tells Horatio how he discovered the plot against him, and managed to turn it against Rosencrantz and Guildenstern sending them off to their own deaths in England. Osric, a courtier, arrives to tell Hamlet of a wager Claudius has placed on the outcome of a fencing match between him and Laertes. Hamlet agrees to it. Horatio expresses misgivings.

Hamlet refers to Matthew's Gospel, X, 29, where Jesus says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father's consent." Hamlet ends this speech saying, "the readiness is all," another reference to Matthew, XXIV, 44, where Jesus says, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

"I am more the antique Roman than the Dane"

The fencing match begins, with the court in attendance. Hamlet apologizes to Laertes, who remains aloof. When they select their foils, Laertes secretly selects a poisoned sword. Hamlet wins the first bout, and nervous that Laertes might be unable to hit Hamlet, Claudius drops a poisoned pearl into a cup of wine and offers it to Hamlet, who declines to drink. Hamlet wins the second bout, and the Queen toasts Hamlet and drinks from the cup before Claudius can stop her. Laertes surprises Hamlet and wounds him with the poisoned sword. Laertes and

Hamlet fight in earnest, and in the scuffle, exchange swords. Hamlet wounds Laertes with the poison sword. Gertrude dies from the poisoned wine. Laertes, dying, confesses his treachery, blames the King and asks Hamlet for forgiveness. Hamlet wounds Claudius with the poisoned sword, and forces him to drink the poisoned wine. The dying Hamlet asks Horatio to tell his story to the world but he instead attempts to join Hamlet in death. Fortinbras arrives with his army, takes charge, orders Hamlet's body to be removed and honors him with cannons firing a salute. Horatio vows that he will tell the world Hamlet's story.

Horatio and Hamlet would have spent a fair amount of time at Wittenberg studying classical history. For ancient Romans, it was better to endure death than disgrace, and they often died at their own hands. Three such deaths are depicted in Shakespeare's plays. As Cassius and Brutus are facing defeat at the hands of Octavius and Antony in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Cassius offers his slave freedom in exchange for killing him. Brutus has to ask four of his soldiers to hold his sword while he runs on it, before he finds one who is willing to do so. In Antony & Cleopatra, after their defeat at the hands of Octavius, and upon hearing of Cleopatra's death, Antony decides he can't go on. He stabs himself, but botches the job and lives long enough to hear that Cleopatra isn't dead after all. In a lot of pain, he dies in her arms. By contrast, Shakespeare's Scottish king Macbeth, when faced with certain defeat says, "Why should I play the Roman fool and die on mine own sword? Whilst I live, the gashes do better on them."

A TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING EVENTS

834 The Danes begin raids on England, where Egbert of Wessex had recently been recognized as overlord.

837 War between the Danes and the English kingdom of Wessex

839 Ethelwulf becomes King of England

840 Danish settlers found the towns of Dublin and Limerick. They still exist in modern-day Ireland

851 Danish forces enter the Thames estuary, land and march on Canterbury, sacking the cathedral; they're defeated by Ethelwulf at Oakley

The crossbow makes its debut in France

860 Gorm the Elder, after uniting Jutland and the Danish isles, becomes King of Denmark

865 Ethelred becomes King of England

The Danes occupy Northumbria

866 The Danes established a kingdom in York

870 The Danes occupy East Anglia, kill its last king, St. Edmund, and destroy Peterborough monastery

Collaborated candles are first used in England to measure time

871 Alfred the Great becomes king of England

878 Alfred recaptures London from the Danes and defeats them at Edington; Treaty of Chippenham

881 Constantine II of Scotland is defeated and killed by the Danes

890 Alfred the Great establishes a regular militia and navy, extends the power of the King's courts, and institutes fairs and markets

893 The Danes renew their attacks on England, but are defeated

899 Alfred the Great dies and is succeeded by Edward the Elder, who takes the title, "King of the Angles and Saxtons"

916 Renewed Danish attacks on Ireland

925 The first play performed as part of the Christian service is performed on Easter morning in several churches

935 Herold Bluetooth becomes the first Christian king of Denmark

941 Danish settlers in England have war with the King

942 Linens and woolens are manufactured in Flanders

946 Edmund I, King of England, succeeded by his brother Edred

954 Eric Bloodaxe, last Danish King of York, is expelled

963 First record of existence of London Bridge

980 Danes attack England again, at Chester, Southampton and Thanet; the Vikings join them two years later, attacking Dorset, Portland and South Wales

983 Venice and Genoa conduct flourishing trade between Asia and Western Europe

985 Sven the Fork-Beard is crowned King of Denmark. He soon conquers Norway and Sweden, and invades England

990 Development of systematic musical notation

994 Olaf of Norway and Sven of Denmark besiege London

1000 Olaf of Norway is killed in the battle of Svolder, and Norway becomes part of the Danish Empire

The heroic poem "Beowulf" is written in old English by an unknown author

Leif Ericson, son of Eric the Red, is said to have 'discovered' America

1003 Sven of Denmark arrives in England with an army

1007 The English King Ethelred II pays 30,000 pounds to the Danes to gain two years freedom from the attacks.

1012 Ethelred II pays additional 48,000 pounds to the Danes.

1013 The Danes conquer England; Ethelred II flees to Normandy

1014 Sven dies and his son Canute succeeds

Ethelred II returns to England

Canute establishes Denmark as a supreme power in Northern Europe

1015 King Olaf II, the Saint, restores Norwegian independence and Christianity

1016 Ethelred II dies and Canute of Denmark ascends the English throne

1017 Canute divides England into four earldoms

1026 Canute goes on pilgrimage to Rome

1028 Canute, fresh from pilgrimage, conquers Norway

1035 Canute dies. His vast kingdom is divided among three sons: Herold gets England; Sven gets Norway; Hardecanute gets Denmark

1040 Duncan of Scotland is murdered by Macbeth. Macbeth becomes King, and then is killed by Macduff, the Thane of Fife (See Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*)

1042 Canute's son Hardecanute dies and England gains independence from Denmark, ending its obligation to pay tribute. In the play, *Hamlet*, Claudius refers to 'neglected tribute' due from England.

1066 England falls to Norman conquerors. The prestige of the English language declines.

Appearance of a comet, later called "Halley's Comet"

1078 Building of the Tower of London begins

1098 The Crusades are in full swing

1110 Earliest record of a miracle play, in Dunstable, England

1120 Playing cards first appear in China

1170 Copenhagen established as Denmark's capital

1173 First authenticated influenza epidemics

1174 First horse races in England

1180 Glass windows appear in English private houses

1200 Engagement rings come into fashion

1202 First court jesters at European courts

1211 Genghis Khan invades China

1220 Saxo Grammaticus (the Saxon who could write) dies. It is in his history of the Danish people that the legendary Prince Amleth appears. (Amleth is a variation of Hamlet)

1250 Hats come into fashion. Goose quills are used for writing.

1290 Spectacles, or eyeglasses are invented

1305 The English capture and execute the Scottish rebel, William Wallace, aka *Braveheart*

1332 Bubonic plague, later known as the Black Death, originates in India and starts to spread, devastating Europe for centuries. Millions of people die.

1337 Hundred Year's war between England and France begins

1386 Chaucer writes *The Canterbury Tales*

1407 Bethlehem (shortened to 'Bedlam') Hospital in London becomes an institution for the insane

1415 England's Henry V defeats the French in the famous battle of Agincourt (see Shakespeare's play, *Henry V*)

1430 Joan of Arc is burned at the stake in Rouen, France.

1479 Leonardo da Vinci invents the parachute

1481 Spanish Inquisition begins under the joint direction of the church and state

1502 University of Wittenberg founded in the town of the same name about three hundred miles south of Elsinore.

1508 The University of Wittenberg becomes famous when a young monk, Martin Luther, is first called to teach

1517 Martin Luther nails his ninety-five theses on the door of a church to protest sales of indulgences, an act which initiates the Protestant Reformation. Wittenberg University becomes the intellectual center of Protestantism

1523 Sweden gains independence from imperialistic Denmark.

1558 Elizabeth I ascends the throne of England.

1564 William Shakespeare is born in Stratford-upon-Avon.

1567 Mary, Queen of Scots marries the Earl of Bothwell, who two years prior had assassinated her first husband. A month later Mary is imprisoned and deposed from her thrown, never to return

1575 In Essex, a brother and sister-in law who married each other (just like Claudius and Gertrude) are convicted of incest.

1576 Another version of Saxo Grammaticus' Hamlet story appears in the French *Histories Tragiques*, by Belleforest

1580 Francis Drake returns to England from a voyage of circumnavigation of the world

1589 Forks are used for the first time at the French court

1590 First evidence of Shakespeare in London

1592 Plague kills 15,000 people in London

1596 English dramatist Thomas Lodge writes about a play in which there is a "ghost crying like an aysterwife, 'Hamlet, revenge!"

1600 Approximate year Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is first performed

Source: *The Timetables of History: A Horizontal Linkage of People and Events*, by Bernard Grun, based upon Werner Stein's Kulterfahrplan; New York, Simon & Schuster, 1991

NEW WORDS THAT APPEAR FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE PLAY HAMLET

Shakespeare sometimes gets credit for 'inventing' more than 2000 English words and usages. We don't know for sure if Shakespeare did invent them, but we do know that they appear in print for the first time in his plays. The following is a brief list of the new words as they appear in *Hamlet.*

Amazement (noun) bewilderment; wonder or astonishment
Derived from an Old English verb meaning "to confuse or bewilder," the noun *amazement* appears in Shakespeare's works thirteen times. In this play, Rosencrantz conveys to Hamlet his mother's concern: "your behavior hath struck her into amazement and admiration." Later, the ghost uses the same word, "look how amazement on thy mother sits."

Besmirch (verb) to soil or stain; to make unclean
As he prepares to leave for France, Laertes warns Ophelia about Hamlet: " Perhaps he loves you now, /And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch /The virtue of his will: but you must fear /His will is not his own…" (A cautel is a deceitful trick.)

Buzzer (noun) one that makes a buzzing sound; gossiper or noisemaker
Upon Laertes' return to Denmark after his father's murder, Claudius tells Gertrude, "Her brother is in secret come from France; Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds, /And wants not buzzers to infect his ear /With pestilent speeches of his father's death."

Excitement (noun) act of arousing; stimulation; enthusiasm
This noun appears for the first time in a Hamlet soliloquy: "How stand I then, /That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd, /Excitements of my reason and my blood, /And let all sleep?"

Film (verb) to coat with a thin or transparent coating
While the noun film, meaning "a thin skin or membrane" dates back to the Old English *filmen*, Shakespeare turned it into a verb: "Mother, for love of grace, /Lay not that flattering unction to your soul, /That not your trespass, but my madness speaks: /It will but skin and film the ulcerous place…" The verb form never really caught on, until modern times, with a different meaning.

Hush (adjective) quiet; preventing disclosure of information
The verb *to hush* was known for about a half century when Shakespeare adopted it as an adjective. The First Player in Hamlet declares, "But as we often see, against some storm, /A silence in the heavens, the rack still, /The bold winds speechless, and the orb below /As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder /Doth rend the region." While the verb form has remained prevalent, the adjective form lives on in the term "hush money."

Outbreak (noun) sudden occurrence; eruption of violence, rebellion, or illness
In *Hamlet,* Polonius asks his servant Reynaldo to find out about Laertes' behavior in Paris. But he warns, "…but breath his faults so quaintly /That they may seem the taints of liberty, /The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind…" While *outbreak* the verb had been around for a long time, it was this newer use of the word as a noun that has prevailed.

Pander (verb) to cater to base desires, to procure for sex
This word comes from Pandarus, the name of a character in Homer's epic poem, the *Iliad,* who breaks the truce between the Greeks and the Trojans by wounding Menelaus. He appears again in Chaucer's poem *Troilus and Criseyde,* in which he is a go-between for the two lovers, and repeats this role in Shakespeare's play, *Troilus and Cressida.* In its noun form, a pander or pandar, is literally a person who arranges sexual encounters. Shakespeare is the first to use it as a verb, as Hamlet accuses his mother of lust in her decision to marry Claudius, "…proclaim no shame /When the compulsive ardour gives the charge, /Since frost itself as actively doth burn /And reason panders will." Today the word is usually followed by 'to,' as in 'pandering to common tastes.'

Perusal (noun) survey or close examination; act of reading through and over
When Ophelia describes to her father Hamlet's earlier visit, she says, "He falls to such a perusal of my face As he would draw it." Shakespeare often uses the verb *peruse*, which was fairly common, but only used the noun *perusal* twice in all of his works.

Rant (verb) to speak in bombastic or extravagant language; to talk excessively
At Ophelia's grave site, Hamlet challenges Laertes, claiming that he loved Ophelia more, and that he will express more grief: "…Nay, an thou'lt mouth, I'll rant as well as thou." It's the only time the word appears in Shakespeare's plays, but it is commonly used today.

Remorseless (adjective) merciless; devoid of regret or guilt for past wrongs
A very popular word in Shakespeare's plays, it derives from the 14th century word, *remorse.* In this play Hamlet uses it to describe his uncle Claudus: "Bloody, bawdy villain! /Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!"

Reword (verb) to echo or repeat; to restate or rephrase in another way
An archaic meaning of *word* was 'to speak,' so the literal meaning of *reword* would be 'to speak again.' When the ghost appears to Hamlet, an apparition his mother cannot see, she decides that it is a fantasy of his troubled brain. He responds: " It is not madness That I have utt'red. Bring me to the test, And I the matter will reword…" Today it has a very different meaning, 'to change the wording.'

Trippingly (adverb) quickly and easily; in a lively manner
Originally the word trip meant "to dance, step, or caper with light quick steps," so to say or do something trippingly was to do it well. Shakespeare uses the word in *Hamlet* in the advice to the players: "Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue."

Source: *Coined by Shakespeare: Words and Meanings First Penned by the Bard*, by Jeffrey McQuain and Stanley Malless; Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster, 1998.

Also here's a list of some of the commonly used of oft-quoted phrases that are from *Hamlet:*

Not a mouse stirring
Middle of the night
Foul play
To the manner born
Murder most foul
By and by
Heart of heart
Woe is me
High and mighty
Sweets to the sweet
Goodnight, ladies
Neither a borrower nor a lender be
To thine own self be true
The lady doth protest too much, methinks
Frailty, thy name is woman
The time is out of joint
The play's the thing
Hoist by their own petard
Goodnight, sweet prince
The rest is silence

A GLOSSARY OF SELECTED REFERENCES FROM HAMLET

A little ere the mighty Julius fell (I, I)
Julius Caesar was a Roman general, statesman, and historian who invaded Britain in 55 B.C., crushed the army of his enemy Pompey in 48 BC, pursued other enemies to Egypt, where he installed Cleopatra as queen in 47 B.C., and in 45 B.C. was given a mandate by the people of Rome to rule as dictator for life. On March 15 of the following year he was assassinated by a group of senators led by Cassius and Brutus (see Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*).

Hyperion to a satyr (I, ii)
In Greek mythology, Hyperion was the Titan associated with the sun. The son of Gaea and Uranus, his children included Helios (the sun), Eos (the dawn) and Selene (the moon). A satyr, on the other hand, is a woodland creature who is half man and half goat, notorious for unrestrained revelry and an insatiable sexual appetite.

Like Niobe, all tears (I, ii)
In Greek mythology, Niobe had six sons and six daughters. She boasted about her children and her superiority over the goddess Leto, who had only two children, Artemis (Diana) and Apollo, twins fathered by Zeus. Artemis and Apollo avenged this slur on their mother by shooting down all of Niobe's children while they were out hunting. Niobe wept incessantly until the gods turned her into stone. (Asimov, p. 94)

As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve (I, iv)
In the first of Hercules' labors, he faced the previously invincible beast, the Nemean lion. Hercules strangled it.

On Fortune's cap we are not the very button (II, ii)
Fortune was personified in the form of the goddess Fortuna, pictured with a wheel. Rosencrantz uses the metaphor to describe his state and make a sexual joke about dwelling neither at the top of fortune nor the bottom, but rather in her middle parts.

Do the boys carry it away?
Ay, that they do, my lord- Hercules and his load too. (II, ii)
In the course of his labors, Hercules enlists the aid of Atlas, the giant Titan who holds up the sky. Hercules temporarily relieves Atlas of his load, in exchange for help. In later years, Atlas is pictured holding up the earth instead of the sky, and by extension, so is Hercules. The Globe Theater, where Shakespeare's company performed, has as its sign a picture of Hercules holding up the earth. So Rosencrantz's line can be seen as a direct reference to Shakespeare's own playing company. (Asimov, p. 112)

When Roscius was an actor in Rome (II, ii)
Quintus Roscius was a famous comic actor in Rome in the first century BC. The famous orator Cicero took elocution lessons from him, and the Roman dictator Sulla raised him to a rank similar to a British knight today. (Asimov, p. 113)

Senceca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light (II, ii)
Seneca was a Roman playwright who wrote bloody, passionate tragedies. Plautus was a Roman playwright who wrote bawdy, slapstick comedies. Shakespeare and his company of players performed both kinds of plays, and histories, and plays that defied categorizations as well (Poems Unlimited)

O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou! (II, ii)
In biblical times, Jephthah was a military leader of the Israelite army. During a battle with the Ammonites, he promised that if he were victorious, he would sacrifice the first living creature to greet him on his return home. It was his daughter, and he kept his word. (Asimov, p. 113)

Twas Aeneas' tale to Dido (II, ii)
Aeneas was a Trojan hero who escaped the fall of Troy, and wandered for seven years before settling in Italy. Virgil's *Aeneid* is his story. During his travels, he is rescued by the Queen of Carthage, Dido, who falls in love with him. He tells her tales of the Greek and Trojan war, including the story of the fall of Troy and Priam's slaughter at the hands of Pyrrhus. Dido shares her kingdom with Aeneas, but he leaves her. In her grief, she kills herself. Aeneas goes on to have many adventures. In some stories, he is credited with the founding of Rome.

The rugged Pyrrhus, like th'Hyrcanian beast (II, ii)
Pyrrhus, also known as Neoptolemus, was the son of the Greek hero Achilles, who was killed by Priam's son Paris during the Trojan War. He was known for some of the more despicable warlike acts during the sacking of Troy, including slaying King Priam. The term 'Pyrrhic victory' means a victory that is offset by staggering losses. Hyracania was a country off the Caspian Sea, and the beast is a tiger.

The milky head of Reverand Priam (II, ii)
Priam was king of Troy during the Trojan war with Greece. His head is milky white because he is old. He had fifty sons and twelve daughters by various wives; his most famous children were Hector, a valiant fighter; Paris, who abducted his lover, Helen, from Sparta thereby starting the war; Cassandra, who could see the future but was cursed in never being believed; and Troilus, who was unlucky in love. Shakespeare wrote a play in which they all appear, *Troilus and Cressida.*

Never did the Cyclops' hammers fall on Mars' armor (II, ii)
The Cyclops were three one-eyed Titans who forged Zeus' lightning bolts. Their servants were satyrs. Mars was the god of war.

Say on, come to Hecuba (II, ii)
Hecuba was queen of Troy when the Greeks sacked the city. Her husband, Priam, a very old man, was slain before her eyes as he clung to an altar. Her sons also died in the war. Her daughter, a virgin devoted to god and the truth, was taken as the concubine of the Greek army's commander. Her daughter-in-law Andromache became the property of the

man whose father killed her husband. The Greeks reduced Hecuba herself, no longer a queen, to slavery. (see Euripides' play, *The Trojan Women)*

I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant (III, ii)
Termagant was a made-up Moslem deity portrayed in medieval Christian mystery plays as violent and overbearing. The term evolved to mean a quarrelsome, scolding woman, so the word went from being disrespectful to one group to being disrespectful to another.

It out Herods Herod (III, ii)
According to the New Testament, Herod was the king of Judea who, in trying to kill Jesus shortly after his birth, had all infants slaughtered. He's often depicted stomping around and ranting.

My imaginations are as foul as Vulcan's stithy (III, ii)
The god of fire and metal work, Vulcan was a black smith. The pit of fire, or forge, in which he worked, called a smithy, or here a stithy. Because of the blackness and fire, there are also associations with hell.

Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbed ground (III, ii)
Phoebus is the same as Apollo, the god of the sun. Neptune is the god of the sea, so his salt wash is the ocean. Tellus is the personification of the earth, so his orbed ground is the globe.

Since love our hearts, and Hymen did our hands
Unite commutal in most sacred bands (III, ii)
Hymen is the god of marriage. He makes an appearance in Shakespeare's comedy, *As You Like It,* and is referred to in five other Shakespeare plays.

With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected (III, ii)
Hecate was an ancient fertility goddess who later became associated with Persephone as queen of Hades and the protector of witches. She is also a character in Shakespeare's *Macbeth.*

Let not ever the soul of Nero
Enter this firm bosom (III, ii)
Nero was Emperor of Rome from AD 54-68. His mother, Agrippina, dominated his early reign. To be rid of her meddling, he had her murdered. According to the legend, she asked her assassins to stab her in the womb that bore so unnatural a son.

It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,
A brother's murder (III, iii)
In the Old Testament, Cain was the eldest son of Adam and Eve. He murdered his brother Abel out of jealousy, and was condemned to be a fugitive. After the Fall, it was the first, and oldest curse in the Old Testament version of human history.

Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command,
A station like the herald, Mercury,
New lighted on a heaven—kissing hill (III, iv)
Hyperion was the Titan of light; Jove, equivalent to Jupiter, was the supreme Roman god, Mars was the Roman god of war, and Mercury was the messenger god, who was very fleet of foot.

They say the owl was a baker's daughter (IV, v)
According to a folk legend, Jesus, in the guise of a beggar asked a baker for some bread. His stingy daughter cut the dough in half, and as a punishment, Jesus turned her into an owl.

Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust (V, I)
Alexander the Great was king of Macedonia from 336-323 BC. He conquered Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Babylonia and Persia before his death at the age of 33. His reign marked the beginning of the Hellenistic Age.

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead
Till of this flat a mountain you have made
T'o'ertop old Pelion or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus (V, I)
In Greek mythology, two young giants, Otus and Ephialtes, decided to attack the gods who lived on Mount Olympus. They planned to pile Mount Pelion, about 1 mile high, onto Mount Ossa, 1.2 miles high. This would create a platform higher than Mount Olympus (1.8 miles high) from which the giants could hurl down missiles on the gods. But they were killed before they could carry out their plot. (Asimov, p. 141)

And if thou prate of Mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart! (V, I)
The Aristotelian picture of the world consisted of the four elements in layers. At the center of the universe was solid earth; around that was a sphere of water (with the dry land we live on sticking out); surrounding that was a sphere of air; and around that was a sphere of fire. Beyond were the heavenly spheres of planets and stars. The burning zone would be the sphere of fire. (Asimov, p. 141)

SOME DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE PLAY

MADNESS

HAMLET *But come;*
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,
As I perchance hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on, …to note
That you know aught of me: this not to do,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you, Swear.

Hamlet, immediately after his private encounter with the ghost, swears Marcellus and Horatio to silence. They are to keep any knowledge of the ghost secret. He has them swear an oath in three parts. He cautions Horatio and Marcellus that he may take on "an antic disposition"; i.e. act strangely, inappropriately, feign madness.

- Why might Hamlet choose to assume a strange behavior? What advantage does this give him? What are the disadvantages?
- For the remainder of the play, how do the other key characters (Polonius, Ophelia, Claudius, Gertrude, Rozencrantz and Guildenstern – even Horatio) react when Hamlet behaves in this manner?
- Knowing what you know about Hamlet, how do you respond to his behavior?

CLAUDIUS *How do you, pretty lady?*

OPHELIA *Well, God 'ild you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter.*
Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.

Ophelia's behavior changed dramatically after her father has been killed by Hamlet. She sings songs. She speaks differently. She speaks disjointedly.

- How is Ophelia's behavior different from Hamlet's "antic disposition"? Why do you think she behaves this way? How do you respond to Ophelia?
- Does your opinion of other key characters change when you perceive how they respond to Ophelia?

GERTRUDE *…an envious sliver broke,*
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:
Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds;
As one incapable of her own distress…

Gertrude reports to Claudius and Laertes that Ophelia has died, and the manner of her death.

- Do you think Ophelia's death was an accident or suicide?
- How do you respond to the news of her death?
- How does her death affect Gertrude? Claudius? Laertes? Hamlet?

HONOR AND REVENGE

GHOST *List, list, O, list!*
If thou didst ever thy dear father love—
HAMLET *O God!*
GHOST *Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.*
HAMLET *Murder!*
GHOST *Murder most foul, as in the best it is;*
But this most foul, strange and unnatural.
HAMLET *Haste me to know't that I, with wings as swift*
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge.

The ghost reveals how Prince Hamlet's father, King Hamlet, was murdered. The ghost wants revenge. Hamlet consents.

- What effect does the ghost have on Hamlet?
- What problems does revenge create for Hamlet?

LAERTES *To hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil!*
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation…only I'll be revenged
Most thoroughly for my father.

Laertes, returning from France, speaks to King Claudius about how he will revenge his father's death.

- How would you describe Laertes' emotional state? His feelings for his father?
- How might Claudius handle this situation?

CLAUDIUS *…what would you undertake,*
To show yourself your father's son in deed
More than in words
LAERTES *To cut his throat I' the church*
CLAUDIUS *No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize;*
Revenge should have no bounds

In a previous scene, Claudius answers Laertes' questions about the circumstances surrounding his father's death. Here, Claudius questions Laertes.

- Having recently been threatened by Laertes, why might Claudius seemingly provoke him now?

HAMLET *Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,*
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house,
And hurt my brother.
LAERTES *I am satisfied in nature,*
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me most
To my revenge: but in my terms of honour
I stand aloof;

In a previous scene, Laertes and Claudius have plotted the 'accidental' murder of Hamlet during a bout of fencing. Here, Laertes and Hamlet shake hands prior to the match.

- What do you think Laertes means when he says, "satisfied in nature" and "terms of honor"? Does Laertes forgive Hamlet?
- What is revenge, and how is it related to honor? To justice? How is it justified?
- What do you think of the practice of revenge?

OATHS, OBEDIENCE AND SWEARING

GHOST *Swear!*

There is an unusual amount of swearing, formal promising and obeying in this play, compared to other plays by Shakespeare. In the opening scene, even in the first lines of the play, Bernardo must formally "stand and unfold" himself to Francisco standing watch. Ophelia makes a promise solicited by her brother, and formally states "I will obey" to her father when told to stay away from Hamlet. The Ghost repeats the word "Swear" four times in succession. Hamlet exacts a three-part oath from Horatio and Marcellus. Even at his death. Hamlet demands an implied promise from Horatio.

- Why do you think these conventions are employed so often in this play?
- What do you think it means to give one's word? To "swear an oath"? To formally state one's obedience?

THE GHOST

HAMLET *The spirit that I have seen*
May be the devil: and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,

Abuses me to damn me…

The ghost of King Hamlet appears four times in this play and speaks to Hamlet

- What are a few of the problems this creates for Hamlet?
- What are a few of the problems this creates for us?

THE FUNCTION OF THE THEATRE

HAMLET *…suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twer, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure..*

In Shakespeare's plays, the audience is spoken to directly in short asides and longer soliloquies. In so doing, the playwright and the actor/characters draw the audience's attention to the fact that they are watching a play, actors are portraying characters in a story, past events are happening in the present and everyone is participating in the creation of an imaginative reality of another time, another place and other people.

- How might the convention of being spoken to directly enhance or diminish one's experience as an audience member?
- If, as an audience member, we get 'caught up' in the story we see and hear, why would a playwright want to draw our attention to that?
- What does it mean to "hold the mirror up to nature"?
- How does one imaginatively enter the world of the play?

EXPLORING SCENES

Some Shakespeare & Company techniques for exploring Shakespeare dramatically.

Feeding In

One of the biggest obstacles to doing scenes in the classroom is trying to read them and act them at the same time. At Shakespeare & Company, we use a technique called "feeding in" to eliminate this obstacle in rehearsals. The students who are actors in the scenes don't hold scripts. Instead, they have feeders who stand behind them with the script. The feeders give the actors the text, a line or a phrase at a time, which the actor then interprets. It's important that the feeder gives the lines loudly enough for the actor to hear, but with absolutely no interpretation. Interpreting is the actor's job. The feeder is simply there to serve the actor, and in a sense should be invisible. The actor can ask the feeder to be louder, to be faster, to give fewer words at a time, to repeat something they didn't quite get, but they shouldn't have to turn around to look at the text. Encourage generosity among all of the students. Feeding in takes a little practice before it is comfortable for everyone. The feeders may forget to wait for the actors to speak. The actor may keep turning around to hear what the feeder is saying. Gentle encouragement and patience are needed, but the payoff can be enormous. With this technique, the actors are free to look at one another, to talk and listen to one another, to move around, to jump and shout, in a word, act. For students who aren't strong readers, just the prospect of reading aloud in front of a class may be so frightening that enjoying themselves is impossible. But with feeding in, all of the students, not just the strong readers, can have a chance to play any of the roles.

Non-judgmental language

When students have finished doing a scene, it's often our habitual response to comment on whether or not it was "good". This response, although it is our habit, doesn't provoke useful discussion or new insights. It's worth the effort to encourage a habit of non-judgmental language. Questions to ask after students work on a scene include: "What came up for you?" "What just happened between you?" "What feelings came up when you said that text?" "What feelings came up for you as you listened to what the other character said to you?" "Did anything surprise you?" "What can we do to make the scene even more exciting?" It's more respectful to let the actor speak first. The audience might then throw in their ideas, or ask the actors to play them out. Non-judgmental language is essential to create an atmosphere where the students will risk exposing their immediate thoughts and feelings. Fearing to be wrong, to look stupid, to not "get it right" shuts them down and kills any enjoyable experience or new insight they might have.

"Getting it Alive" vs. "Getting it right"

Sometimes, the more outrageous a scene becomes, the more alive, the more illuminating it can be. And often, allowing students to express themselves comically can lead to greater expression in the tragic scenes. One way to create excitement is to put non-speaking characters on stage. Let your own students' imaginations play. Give yourself and them the huge permission they need to play the scenes boldly, to bring it alive. Shakespeare set the play in his own time period. Let students set it in theirs. Encourage them to rise to the outrageous language and situations of the play.

SOME SAMPLE SCENES

The following are examples of scenes we have cut for classroom performances. You may wish to use them. You may wish to add lines back in. You may wish to cut your own. You may even wish to let your students cut their own. Cutting scripts involves significant decisions based upon a good understanding of the scene. Cut scenes should be able to stand alone in meaning, and flow well dramatically..

Laertes Says Goodbye To Ophelia

LAERTES, OPHELIA

LAERTES My necessaries are embark'd: farewell:
And, sister, do not sleep,
But let me hear from you.

OPHELIA Do you doubt that?

LAERTES For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute; No more.

OPHELIA No more but so?

LAERTES Think it no more;
His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own;
For he himself is subject to his birth:
Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,
If with too credent ear you list his songs,
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmaster'd importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,

OPHELIA I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his own rede.

LAERTES O, fear me not.
I stay too long: but here my father comes.

Ophelia Recounts A Bad Experience

OPHELIA, POLONIUS

POLONIUS How now, Ophelia! What's the matter?

OPHELIA O, my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted!

POLONIUS With what, I' the name of God?

OPHELIA My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced;
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors,--he comes before me.

POLONIUS Mad for thy love?

OPHELIA My lord, I do not know;
But truly, I do fear it.

POLONIUS What said he?

OPHELIA He took me by the wrist and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm;
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so;
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being: that done, he lets me go:

POLONIUS Come, go with me: I will go seek the king.
This is the very ecstasy of love,

Exaunt

Hamlet and Polonius Exchange Pleasantries

HAMLET, POLONIUS

POLONIUS How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET Well, God-a-mercy.

POLONIUS Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.

POLONIUS Not I, my lord.

HAMLET Then I would you were so honest a man.

POLONIUS Honest, my lord!

HAMLET Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

POLONIUS That's very true, my lord.
What do you read, my lord?

Hamlet and Polonius Exchange More Pleasantries

HAMLET, POLONIUS

POLONIUS What do you read, my lord?

HAMLET Words, words, words.

POLONIUS What is the matter, my lord?

HAMLET Between who?

POLONIUS I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

HAMLET Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down, for yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

POLONIUS [Aside] Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't. Will you walk Out of the air, my lord?

HAMLET Into my grave.

POLONIUS Indeed, that is out o' the air. How pregnant sometimes his replies are! .—My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

HAMLET You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal: except my life, except my life, except my life.

POLONIUS Fare you well, my lord.

HAMLET These tedious old fools!

Hamlet and Ophelia Meet Publically

HAMLET, OPHELIA, (CLAUDIUS, POLONIUS hidden)

HAMLET The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

OPHELIA My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed long to re-deliver;
I pray you, now receive them.

HAMLET No, not I;
I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA My honour'd 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.

Hamlet and Ophelia Continued

HAMLET, OPHELIA, (CLAUDIUS, POLONIUS hidden)

HAMELT 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.

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: 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 nunnery.

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, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go, and quickly too. Farewell

Ophelia Mourns Her Father

GERTRUDE, HORATIO, OPHELIA, CLAUDIUS

OPHELIA Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

GERTRUDE How now, Ophelia!

OPHELIA (sings) He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

Enter CLAUDIUS

GERTRUDE Alas, look here, my lord.

CLAUDIUS How do you, pretty lady?

OPHELIA Well, God 'ild you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter.
Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.

CLAUDIUS Conceit upon her father.

OPHELIA Pray you, let's have no words of this
(sings) To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.
Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,
And dupp'd the chamber-door;
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more.

CLAUDIUS Pretty Ophelia!

OPHELIA I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him I' the cold ground. My brother shall know of it: and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night.

Exit OPHELIA

CLAUDIUS Follow her close; give her good watch,
I pray you.

Exit HORATIO

In the Graveyard

HAMLET, HORATIO, GRAVEDIGGER (called clown)

HAMLET	Whose grave's this, sirrah?
CLOWN	Mine, sir.
HAMLET	What man dost thou dig it for?
CLOWN	For no man, sir.
HAMLET	What woman, then?
CLOWN	For none, neither.
HAMLET	Who is to be buried in't?
CLOWN	One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead.
HAMLET	How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. How long hast thou been a grave-maker?
CLOWN	Of all the days I' the year, I came to't that day that young Hamlet was born; he that is mad, and sent into England.
HAMLET	Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?
CLOWN	Why, because he was mad: he shall recover his wits here; or, if he do not, it's no great matter there.
HAMLET	Why?
CLOWN	'Twill, a not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he.

WEBSITES

Play Texts

http://etext.virginia.edu/shakespeare/folio
http://web.uvic.ca/shakespeare/Annex/DraftTxt/index.html
Both sites offer the Folio text.

www.it.usyd.edu.au/~matty/Shakespeare/
They claim to be the "Web's oldest Shakespeare site." This is our favorite site because when you copy and paste the text into Microsoft Word, the text is formatted into tables, rather than with nasty tabs.

http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/
Businesslike and scholarly texts of the plays, supported by MIT.

Elizabethan/Renaissance

http://renaissance.dm.net/compendium/home.html
LIFE IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND: *A Compendium of Common Knowledge 1558-1603*. This site offers a concise, yet superficial view of basic daily existence in Elizabethan England. Good for a basic introduction to the period and quick fact searches.

http://library.byu.edu/~rdh/eurodocs/homepage.html
EURODOCS: Primary Historical Documents from Western Europe
Contains facsimiles of documents from the period concerning wedding ceremonies, 16th &17th century newspapers and writings authored by Queen Elizabeth I.

http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1577harrison-england.html
MODERN HISTORY SOURCEBOOK: *Holinshed's Chronicles of England 1577*
Holinshed's Chronicles are a primary source account of daily living in England during the Renaissance. It includes a discussion of topics such as laws, policies, inventions and public health.

http://renaissance.dm.net/sites.html
RENAISSANCE RESOURCES
Designed for scholars and Renaissance Faire aficionados, this page has links to nearly anything and everything, from portraits of Elizabeth I to the rules of rapier and dagger fighting to Elizabethan gardening and the Great Chain of Being. If the site is missing anything at all, you bet it links to a page where that something can be found.

http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare/spear.html
Guide to Shakespeare's playhouses and playing

www.sca.org/
OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE SOCIETY FOR CREATIVE ANACHRONISM

The society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) is an international organization dedicated to researching and re-creating pre-17th-century European history. Some of the material is highly esoteric, but the SCA is a wonderful resource for finding helpful people in your area.

Sources

http://www.utexas.edu/depts/classics/chaironeia/
http://www.e-classics.com/plutarch.htm

Either of these websites include anything and everything you would want to know about Plutarch, including the text of Plutarch's *Lives*.

Lesson Plans and study guides

http://www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/resources/shakespeare/hamletmain.html
Unit designed for teaching *Hamlet* to grade 12 students.

http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=618
Links and lesson plans for teaching Shakespeare's plays to primary and secondary students.

http://www.rsc.org.uk/home/344.asp
Play guides for all of Shakespeare's works, from The Royal Shakespeare Company in England, for both teachers and students.

http://www.allshakespeare.com/hamlet/
Features high-quality study guides and lesson plans in various academic areas

http://www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Titles/hamlet/
An act-by-act summary and analysis of *Hamlet*, as well as an e-text of the play

http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/
A thorough guide and links to all and anything Shakespeare

Miscellaneous

www.webweaving.org
PERSONALIZED SHAKESPEAREAN INSULTS.
We dare you to go to this site, thou tottering shard-borne pumpion!

Please Note:
If you have any suggestions of other websites to add to our list, please email us at education@shakespeare.org.

Also, due to the constantly changing nature of the web, let us know if any of these sites are no longer accessible, so that we can update our list.

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