PREP YOUR STUDENTS FOR THE SHOW—
Book your pre- or post-show classroom workshop!
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GUIDE CREDITS

Editor: Trish Tillman
Contributors: Jordan Battle, Evan Boomer, Jordin Bradley, Erika Budrovich, Brooke Burke, Kenya Hall, Brett Jones, Hayley Cotton
Copy Editors: Stefanie Kalem and Marilyn Langbehn
Layout & Graphics: Ilsa Brink
OUR MISSION

We strive for everyone, regardless of age, circumstance, or background, to discover and express the relevance of Shakespeare and the classics in their lives by:

- Making boldly imagined and deeply entertaining interpretations of Shakespeare and the classics.
- Providing in-depth, far-reaching creative educational opportunities.
- Bringing disparate communities together around the creation of new American plays inspired by classic literature.

OUR FUNDERS AND SPONSORS

STUDENT DISCOVERY UNDERWITERS

The National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest presents Shakespeare for a New Generation. California Shakespeare Theater is one of 42 professional theater companies selected to participate in Shakespeare for a New Generation, bringing the finest productions of Shakespeare to middle- and high-school students in communities across the United States. This is the tenth year of Shakespeare for a New Generation, the largest tour of Shakespeare in American history.

Artistic Learning programs are also supported by generous contributions the numerous donors to our annual Gala Fund-a-Need Campaign and Bank of America Foundation, Dale Family Fund, Sidney E. Frank Foundation, Walter and Elise Haas Fund, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Thomas J. Long Foundation, MCJ Amelior Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation, the Drs. Ben and A. Jess Shenson Foundation at the San Francisco Foundation, and the Morris Stulsaft Foundation.

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ARTISTIC LEARNING PROGRAMS
AT CAL SHAKES

The vision of the Artistic Learning department of Cal Shakes is to become a leading Bay Area citizen, creating a culture of lifelong learners and nourishing imaginations in preparation for the work of life.

Cal Shakes offers a variety of theater programs taught by theater professionals throughout the school year and summer.

IN-SCHOOL ARTIST RESIDENCIES
With innovative curriculum, Cal Shakes brings working artists into the schools to teach theater arts to develop students’ intellectual and social skills. We work with classroom teachers to choose the text—Shakespeare or otherwise—and to align curriculum and methods in conjunction with the classroom teacher’s goals. All residencies consist of 10-12 hours of instruction over several weeks.

STUDENT DISCOVERY MATINEES (Field trips)
Our well-rounded approach to Student Matinees consists of multiple offerings, including this free Teacher/Student Guide, optional pre- and post-show classroom visits by teaching artists, a lively pre-performance engagement at the Theater, and a Q&A session with actors immediately following the show. This multipronged approach offers a unique opportunity for students to develop a lasting appreciation of theater and of Shakespeare through dynamic presentation and the experience of a live work of art.

AFTER-SCHOOL CLASSES
After-school programs are a popular offering in many aspects of theater including acting, physical comedy, and improvisation as well as Shakespeare. We will create curriculum based on your class size, age range, and subject needs, and we come to your school! First grade and up.

SUMMER SHAKESPEARE CONSERVATORIES
Cal Shakes hosts Summer Shakespeare Conservatories in Lafayette and Oakland, in which students study with professional Cal Shakes actors and artists. Scholarships are available. Students return year after year to experience the joy of working intensely in theater fundamentals such as acting, improvisation, stage combat, and voice, culminating in a production of a Shakespeare play in original language.

For more information or to register for any of our programs, please call the Artistic Learning Coordinator at 510.548.3422 x136, or email learn@calshakes.org.
Pictured: Clint Ramos’ set model for *Hamlet*, the majority of which is taken up by an empty swimming pool. Ramos and director Liesl Tommy took much inspiration from photos of abandoned mansions and palaces—places that were post-power but pre-ruin.
More books, essays, encyclopedias, lesson plans, lectures, and historical research has probably been written on Hamlet than on any other play. The sheer amount of quotes alone that have made it into our modern speech, to the point of cliché, speaks to the amount of attention that this play has received over the 400-plus years since Shakespeare wrote the story.

So, why not more? We are thrilled to have you and your students join us for this season’s Student Discovery Matinee production of Hamlet. Our goal is to enliven students’ engagement with this play in a deep and memorable way through seeing the live performance and your use of the background information and activities provided in this Teacher’s Guide. The title of our guide is Hamlet: More Things in Heaven and Earth. The intent is to address the complexity of teaching such an expansive work and provide specific tools you can use to make it vivid and personal for yourself and your students.

This is a play that especially resonates in our time. We see Hamlet in every young adult sulking in the corner, dressed in black; we feel him in our own fright and confusion about what death could be; we know ourselves through the questions he dares to voice that we may merely think about our family or our own true nature.

But even though adult eyes may see many connections, students probably will not—there’s all that Beautiful Poetic Language and Reverence of Literature that gets in the way. We urge you to get rid of both as much as you can in your work with your students. Theater teaches us to engage our whole body, brain, and emotional understanding—and if you let Shakespeare play in your class as his actors played onstage, the students cannot help but connect. And yes, it’s fun; and yes, that directly connects to doing rigorous and demanding work. It’s a great way to bridge the resistance gap.

So see the play, here or elsewhere, or don’t—but certainly get yourself and your students on your feet, and enter Hamlet like you would a world through a wardrobe or beyond the Shire. Take the journey. It will reward you.

Enjoy!

The Cal Shakes Artistic Learning Department
Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, lives at Elsinore Castle with his mother, Queen Gertrude, and his new stepfather, Claudius. Hamlet's own father, the previous King, died only two months ago, and Claudius is also Hamlet's uncle—his father's brother. Hamlet is not happy with this.

The watchmen report to Hamlet that a ghost that looks like the old King has been seen on the ramparts at night. Hamlet goes to see. When the Ghost reappears, it speaks to Hamlet, claiming to be his dead father. The Ghost asks Hamlet to avenge his murder. Hamlet, horrified, vows to "remember."

Uncertain of whom he can trust, Hamlet pretends to be insane by speaking nonsense and making mean jokes.

Gertrude and Claudius send two of Hamlet's friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to spy on him and discover the cause of his apparent madness. Claudius and Polonius also spy on Hamlet at various times.

Ophelia, Hamlet's sometimes-girlfriend, is forbidden by her father, Polonius, to see Hamlet. She obeys. But after a few days, Polonius thinks that Hamlet is crazy because Ophelia won't see him. He decides to test the situation by sending Ophelia to Hamlet. Hamlet clearly rejects her, acting even more frighteningly insane, finishing off his litany of insults by telling her that her destiny is not to be loved, but rather to be cloistered in a nunnery. Claudius and Polonius, hidden, watch the exchange. It is uncertain whether Hamlet knows they are there or not, but he certainly knows people, in general, are watching him.

Hamlet wants to find a way to prove that his uncle killed his father. He arranges for a play of the murder of a king to be performed, hoping that it will reveal Claudius' guilt. Indeed, just at the point where the actors are playing out the murder in the same way the ghost said he was killed, Claudius demands a halt to the play.

After the play, Claudius goes to the chapel in the castle, but, crushed by guilt, feels unable to honestly pray. Instead he speaks out loud about having killed his brother. Hamlet has followed him and, waiting in hiding, is tempted to murder him right there. However, Hamlet decides not to kill Claudius at prayer (as Hamlet thinks he is), as then Claudius' soul would go to heaven—he wants his uncle's soul in hell.

Gertrude is now extremely concerned about her son. She calls Hamlet to her bedroom while Polonius hides behind a curtain to listen. Hamlet angrily accuses his mother of insulting his father's memory and being in league with a murderer. She is frightened by his rage, and calls out for help. Polonius, scared, also calls out. When Hamlet hears Polonius, he stabs him to death through the curtain, hoping to kill Claudius. On seeing it is actually Polonius, he continues to berate his mother but then
sees the Ghost appear in the room (invisible to his mother); the Ghost urges Hamlet onto the real revenge.

Now that Hamlet has actually proven dangerous, Claudius sends him with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on a ship to England, where he has given orders for Hamlet to be killed. Hamlet discovers the written orders and substitutes a letter demanding instead that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern be executed immediately on arrival. Hamlet then escapes and makes his way back to Denmark.

Meanwhile, Ophelia has gone mad with grief over the death of her father and the fact that Hamlet, her love, killed him. Laertes returns to bury his father, Polonius, and seeing his sister, Ophelia, insane, makes him want to exact revenge on Hamlet even more than he did before. As he talks with Claudius, Gertrude comes in with the news that Ophelia has drowned herself in the river.

Hamlet has sent a letter that he is returning to Denmark. Claudius tells this to Laertes and they come up with a plan to kill Hamlet: Laertes will challenge Hamlet to a duel and secretly put lethal poison on the end of his sword, to ensure Hamlet’s death. To be sure of success, Claudius also poisons a cup of wine to offer Hamlet.

Hamlet returns to Elsinore to find a gravedigger making a grave, but does not find out that it is for Ophelia. He holds up the skull of a man he once knew and wonders again about death and what lies beyond. Ophelia’s body is brought out; Hamlet is stunned to see her dead. He swears that he loved her more than “ten thousand brothers,” which makes Laertes even angrier, and they begin to fight. Claudius proposes the duel instead, according to his and Laertes’ earlier-laid plan.

Everyone gathers to watch the match. Hamlet scores the first two points. Claudius thinks that perhaps Laertes won’t get a chance to scratch Hamlet with the poisoned sword, so he offers the poisoned cup as refreshment. Hamlet declines, saying he will drink later. Laertes then scores the next point, scratching Hamlet with the fatal sword. Gertrude toasts Hamlet, mistakenly drinking from the poisoned cup. Hamlet becomes angry that Laertes’ sword actually drew blood (as it was and still is against the rules to have a real, pointed sword in a fencing match) and, in a rage, scuffles with Laertes. Both swords fall, getting mixed up. Hamlet grabs the first sword he can get his hands on—the poisoned one—and wounds Laertes with it. Gertrude suddenly falls and dies, crying out that the drink is poison.

Laertes, weakened by the poisoned sword, reveals the plot to kill Hamlet, blaming Claudius for all before he dies. Hamlet stabs Claudius with the poisoned sword and forces him to drink the rest of the poisoned wine. Hamlet begins to feel the poison killing him as well; he calls Horatio to ask him to tell his story, and dies.
WHO’S WHO: THE ACTORS

CAST

Julie Eccles*
Gertrude, as cast

Nick Gabriel*
Horatio, as cast

Dan Hiatt*
Polonius, Gravedigger, as cast

Zainab Jah*
Ophelia, as cast

Jessica Kitchens*
Rosencrantz, as cast

LeRoy McClain*
Hamlet, as cast

Nicholas Pelczar*
Laertes, Lucianus, as cast

Brian Rivera*
Guildenstern, Bernardo, as cast

Adrian Roberts*
Claudius, The Ghost, as cast

Danny Scheie*
Player King, Osric, as cast

Mia Tagano*
Player Queen, Doctor, as cast

Joseph Salazar
Marcellus, Soldier, as cast

*Denotes member of Actors’ Equity Association.
WHO’S WHO: THE CHARACTERS

Hamlet: The prince of Denmark. Son of Queen Gertrude and nephew of King Claudius

Claudius: King of Denmark and Hamlet’s uncle. Married to Gertrude

Gertrude: Queen of Denmark, and Hamlet’s mother. Married to Claudius, the brother of her first husband

Polonius: King Claudius’ chief councilor. Ophelia’s and Laertes’ father

Laertes: Polonius’ son and Ophelia’s brother

Ophelia: Polonius’ daughter, in love with Hamlet

The Ghost: The ghost of Hamlet’s dead father

Horatio: Hamlet’s best friend

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: Hamlet’s friends from school and King’s courtiers

Marcellus, Bernardo: Members of the King’s guard who perform the night watch

Osric: A courtier

The Players: Actors hired by Hamlet to perform a play reenacting his father’s murder

Lucianus: A character in the play-within-the-play

The Gravedigger: A man who digs Ophelia’s grave

The Doctor: A Doctor of Divinity, or priest

Note: Role assignments subject to change.
“Do you think I am easier played on than a pipe?”

Hamlet, Act 3, scene 2

Consider the following questions before and after the show.

**BEFORE Viewing the Play**

Describe what you think this royal family is like. How would you feel being a part of a family like this?

What do you wonder about Hamlet, just from knowing what happens in the play?

Look for all the ways that Hamlet tries to figure out what to do about the Ghost’s request.

Look for how people use words to express themselves, especially when they are insane, or faking insanity.

As you watch the play, try to decide if this kind of story that would happen in real life.

**AFTER Viewing the Play**

Do you think Hamlet did the right thing?

Do you think Hamlet really loved Ophelia?

Did the setting and costumes of the characters make sense to you?

Why doesn’t Hamlet act on what the Ghost says immediately?

Do you think what Shakespeare did was a good way to end the story? Is it a good way to end in real life?

Do you think revenge is necessary or deserved in certain cases? Why do you think that?

What do you think of Gertrude?

Why does Ophelia go insane?

What do you think Hamlet is really about?

Did you recognize any parts of this story from your own life? Do you know any people like these, or anyone that acts like this in a relationship?

See the “Write Your Own Critique” page in the Activity Appendix for more ideas about what to watch for and how to write about your reactions after the show.
When asked the number-one challenge with Shakespeare's works, modern-day audiences will almost always respond: “the language.” It's true that the language does sound different to our ears and that Shakespeare uses phrases we no longer use in our everyday speech. But think of this: There are phrases that we use today that would baffle Shakespeare, should he magically time-travel to this day and age. That's because language (especially English) is constantly transforming.

Can you match these original quotes from Hamlet to their modern-day translations?

**Come, come, and sit you down. You shall not budge.**
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

*Hamlet, Act 3, scene 4*

**To be, or not to be, that is the question:**
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them.

*Hamlet, Act 3, scene 1*

**Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave I am!**

*Hamlet, Act 2, scene 2*

**How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable**
Seem to me all the uses of this world!

*Hamlet, Act 1, scene 2*

**This above all: to thine own self be true,**
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

*Polonius, Act 1, scene 3*

**When sorrows come, they come not single spies**
But in battalions.

*Claudius, Act 4, scene 5*

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

*Ophelia, Act 3, scene 1*

**If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart**
Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.

*Hamlet, Act 5, scene 2*

When bad things happen, they don't happen one at a time, they happen in multitudes.

Come here and sit down. Don't move.
You're not leaving until you look in this mirror—take a good look at your soul and see what you've done.

If you ever loved me, please stay sad for a while.
Endure the pain of living with my death a while longer so you can tell the world the truth about what happened to me.

The most important thing is to be true to yourself because if you do, then you’ll never be fake with anyone else.

He used to be brilliant; madness has ruined him.

The question is whether it's better to be alive or dead. Is it better to suffer life's painful events or to just avoid it all by dying?

Everything in life seems so tiring, dull and useless.

Ugh! I am so out of control, and such a worthless person.
MORE THINGS
IN HEAVEN
AND EARTH
“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

*Hamlet, Act 1, scene 5*

The great and frustrating thing about *Hamlet* is that it is about, well, almost everything. We’ve chosen some handy themes and given you starting points to make the connections throughout the play to them.

A director’s job is to interpret the play for a particular time and audience. They must envision a production based on close and intelligent reading of the text that illuminates the play in some way. In choosing to dramatize, we must have a particular lens through which the many facets of a play can reflect and resonate.

Shakespeare does not give us a set design, nor costumes, not even stage directions, allowing us to choose and move with our vision (as long as it can be supported by the text). Most directors cut Shakespeare’s work to two-and-half or three hours in the first place, and even that is already long for today’s audiences. Then the director must find a single compelling entry into the play. To choose too much would be muddy—therefore, most likely, incomprehensible and boring.

A classroom teacher must do the same. Choosing one compelling theme around which the class will revolve can open up much more room for engagement.

So what can you look at in *Hamlet*? What do you wish to explore most?

**Playing Roles**
The play within a play performed for Claudius
Pretending to be friends (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)
Women’s infidelity
Gertrude’s various roles as wife, Queen, and mother
Hamlet’s feigned madness
Claudius as innocent man

**Death**
What is death: the “undiscovered country”
Ghosts
Yorick's skull: the passage of time and the wonder of death's transformation
Murder/suicide: what is an “un-natural death” vs. natural death

Family
Incest
Parents and children: obedience, rebellion
What kind of fathers are Hamlet Senior (Ghost) and Polonius?

Madness
What was “insanity” in Elizabethan times?
What does it mean today—mental illness?
How does Ophelia represent this?
What is Shakespeare saying with this device?

Language
How do people’s words cover up their real intentions?
When are they speaking truthfully?
Symbolism of darkness (in clothes, in nighttime)

Spying
Mistrust
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on Hamlet
Polonius and Claudius eavesdropping on conversations

Revenge
Hamlet following traditional revenge play structure of time
Historical methods of revenge/modern-day revenge
What is revenge? Why do people want to get it?

Politics
How Claudius and Hamlet have to act knowing the public observes every move
Succession to the throne—why didn’t Hamlet inherit it automatically upon the death of his father?

See the next page for a teacher’s discussion about Hamlet.
CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HAMLET

This section is to get you thinking about how you might want to teach and talk about Hamlet in your classes.

Philippa Kelly, the resident dramaturg at Cal Shakes, summarizes the play this way:

*The character of Hamlet is a mess. Hamlet’s agony increases as he tries to push himself to avenge his father’s death by killing his uncle. He is so agonized that he wishes for death. But he’s too scared to kill himself, too scared to kill his uncle—he doesn’t know what’s out there after death. But there is, nonetheless, a lot of death in this play, as Hamlet begins to mistrust almost everyone around him. Hamlet doesn’t know how to love any more, and his fiancée ends up killing herself after he rejects her and kills her father. He arranges for the death of his two old school friends, since they have agreed to betray his trust. A pile of bodies—that of his mother, his uncle, his fiancée’s brother, his friends—surrounds him at the end; Hamlet has completed the act of revenge, but at the price of many lives, including his own.*

Here’s a Facebook conversation from January 2012, begun by a high-school drama teacher:

*Ed Meehan* Okay all my drama friends ... what is *Hamlet* about, anyway?

*Trish Tillman* I’m studying it right now to figure out how to teach it and, at the moment, I think it’s about the experience of death and the unexplainable emotional chaos that happens when people die—loved or not, by murder or suicide. Although, for my middle-schoolers, I think I’ll emphasize family secrets as a less scarily existential way of looking at that kind of emotional turmoil.

*Darrell B Anderson* Fighting growing up. That last childish “it’s not fair!” before you give in and become an adult.

*Joyce Thrift* I think it’s about whether or not revenge is worth your humanity.

*Johnny Mansbach* It’s about two-and-a-half hours.

*Robin Edwards* I believe it is about how one man deals with the pressure
of a dysfunctional family and chooses to examine those in the world around him; and how that world falls apart while he stands by watching.

Robin Spring You have to choose—a revenge tragedy that is complicated by Hamlet’s neurotic personality, or complications of parents and children, or how do you know who to trust, or... I think it was Stephen Booth who said Hamlet was a greased pig, which doesn’t make it easy for a director! When I teach it, I show the kids certain episodes of the 1st season of Slings and Arrows and encourage them to approach it as actors, making choices of what to play.

Anna Parsons I think there are CliffsNotes on that ;)

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For Students—What Grabs You?

After you have done a basic explanation and exploration of the play’s plot and characters, use the following as the basis for discussion and/or a writing prompt. The idea is to get the students to become aware of their own reactions, and to help them express them nonjudgmentally. You may find this useful; the “audience” of the classroom will help direct your exploration of the play.

What strikes you most about the play right now? What is most interesting to you? Why?
One of the key things that acting demands, as one works to embody a character, is the development of empathy. A fifth-grade student who recently played Lady Macbeth in one of our summer programs said:

“Lady Macbeth helped me understand that you can’t just play a character as evil. You have to see the world from her perspective. When I watch the news I think about that: Why are people doing what they are doing?”

An actor must come from a textual, imaginative, and personal place to figure out why a character behaves as they do in a play. When you create the means for your students to do this as well, the story becomes compelling.

As you work on scenes from the play, actively ask your students questions like the following. These are not writing prompts; rather, they are to be explored as the actors are on their feet and actively speaking and moving through the text.

### Textual Questions

- Where is your character now?
- What happened just before this scene?
- Where does your character go after this scene?
- What do the words mean that you are saying? Sum it up.

### Imaginative

- What effect does the place where the character is now have on them? (For example: a dark night on a castle roof may mean fear, which may mean the character whispers or screams, or is sneaking around. Very different from a brightly lit and festive throne room.)
- What does your character want to achieve in this scene; or what do they want? (For example, to scare someone, to inspire them, to forgive, to kill.) Why?
How would you feel if it was you, not the character, in the scene right now? How would you react? Do you think the character shares any of those feelings?

How long has it been since your character has last been seen in the play? What happened to them in between that scene and this?

Remember that there are definitely right answers to the Textual questions, so your students need to do the research or be helped by you to find the answers. However, for the Imaginative and Personal questions, any answer that the student gives should be allowed room for exploration so that the student may discover an answer that works for them. This provides an invaluable sense of ownership and pride that will automatically give that part of the text meaning that you, as the teacher, might never have been able to impart.

Writing Prompt for a Soliloquy: Looking for What’s Inside

Do you know someone who is really quiet in a group, doesn’t have many friends, and maybe seems kind of sad or strange? Try to think of them as someone who isn’t really scary or weird, but as a person who might have something on their mind.

Write the inner thoughts of this person as s/he might say them when s/he’s alone. Imagine this person alone in his or her room, or late at night in the house when everyone else is asleep, or in a deserted place like an old building or other hideaway.

**Challenge:** Write the soliloquy again, but this time, about halfway through, the person speaking realizes that someone he knows is spying on him and can hear his thoughts. How does the speech change? Think about whether the person likes/dislikes the spy, and what he might want the spy to overhear.
THE REVENGE TRAGEDY

“Haste me to know’t, that I, with wings as swift as meditation or the thoughts of love, may sweep to my revenge.”

Hamlet, Act 1, scene 5

We all feel we have been treated unjustly at some time in our lives—the referee makes a stupid call, the teacher/parent/boss punishes the wrong person, we feel cheated of money or love or something else we feel we deserve. Some people take the idea of getting revenge pretty far, from outright shootings to being emotionally or socially punishing.

What is a Revenge Tragedy?

Hamlet is one of Shakespeare’s four major tragedies, which are plays where the protagonist, usually the main character, suffers from an all-too-human flaw that brings them to their downfall. Hamlet, of course, turns on the act of seeking revenge and its questionable morality. Revenge tragedies were a popular and specific genre of drama in Shakespeare’s time, which used specific elements and plot points to depict the protagonist’s search for justice by righting a gruesome wrong. These usually include:

• A disguised death or murder; often of a ruler killed by someone close to them.
• The appearances of ghosts, usually of the murdered, to send a message.
• An avenger or person seeking revenge. Often the son/kinsmen of murdered ruler.
• Plotting, intrigue, and scheming among murderer and avenger
• Contrived appearances and festivities, often including a play within the play.
• The protagonist and/or other characters becoming or pretending to become crazy.
• Multiple murders and the graphic depiction of killing, including of all main characters.
History of the Revenge Tragedy

The first well-known and classified revenge tragedy was titled *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587-1590) by English dramatist Thomas Kyd. This play established the genre's archetype, which grew increasingly popular through the early 1640s. Many dramatists wrote plays using this style, furthering its literary sophistication and importance. *Hamlet* is a perfect example, as Shakespeare brilliantly used the standard plot points and characters to psychologically explore the subject of revenge and comment on its moral ambiguity.

References:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revenge_play
http://www.enotes.com/revenge-tragedy-criticism/revenge-tragedy
http://cla.calpoly.edu/~dschwart/engl339/revenge.html
DELAY

“Now might I do it pat, now he is praying; And now I’ll do’t. ...No!”
Hamlet, Act 3 scene 3

Why does Hamlet wait so long?

Hamlet has been characterized as weak and indecisive—even wimpy. After all, he has the duration of longest Shakespeare play in the canon in which to get his revenge. In 29,844 total words, of which Hamlet speaks 30% of the time, you'd think he could get it together. From a modern American viewpoint, this kind of dithering makes us a little impatient for the same reasons that soccer isn’t popular here—we want to win and win fast, with lots of points. Even when we know that the art form of a play demands development and time in which to live the life of the character, we can get frustrated with Hamlet’s endless talking and lack of action.

Isaac Asimov, writer of one of the most comprehensive studies of all Shakespeare’s plays (see References: Books and Internet) argues that without understanding the reasons for Hamlet’s delay and the fatal mistake he makes in doing so, we don’t fully understand the play.

Here are two main reasons he outlines:

The Supernatural

Ghosts in Elizabethan times were not trusted to actually be the person they resembled. Ghosts could be demons, tricking humans to believe they were relatives in order to lure them to do evil deeds or to go to their deaths. You can see this in that everyone refers to the Ghost as “resembling” the old King, but not as the King himself.

Act 1, scene 1

MARCELLUS
What, has this thing appear’d again tonight?

HORATIO
What art thou that usurp’st this time of night, Together with that fair and warlike form In which the majesty of buried Denmark Did sometimes march?
Act 1, scene 4

HAMLET
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn’d.
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Thou com’st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee.

HORATIO
What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetle o’er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness?

Politics
Claudius and Hamlet are already locked in a personal battle for the throne, and each knows the game the other is playing. It is no accident that Claudius timed his ascension to the throne while Hamlet was away, unable to claim his authentic right to the throne (see further explanation in Asimov's Guide). So as we take into account Hamlet's grief for his father and disgust with his mother, we need to examine that Hamlet's actions are chess moves to get to the throne. Neither Claudius nor Hamlet can kill the other outright—each one is perceived as a kind and good ruler and member of the royal family, and the people of Denmark are fond of Hamlet in particular.

Asimov believes that Hamlet finally trips up his game when he decides not to kill Claudius in the chapel, thinking Claudius is praying and that by killing him in that act, Claudius' soul would go to heaven. Hamlet desires his uncle in hell. And that is the fatal moment of delay, surprisingly uncalculated for Hamlet up until now. Also Shakespeare, always reveling in the highly ironic, keeps from Hamlet overhearing that Claudius has just said that he is so overcome with his own sin, he cannot in good faith truly pray.

A Mouse or a Man?

If you were defending Hamlet in court, you would have to convince the jury of a particular view of his character. Do you think he is a mouse, forced finally into action by circumstance alone? Or is he a man, cleverly playing the game with the right moves all along? Write a three-paragraph final speech to a jury as a trial lawyer who is trying to clear Hamlet’s name. Would you say he should not be blamed because he was helpless in the circumstances (mouse) or because he was rightfully defending his honor the best way he could (man)?
ELIZABETHAN CULTURE
OVERVIEW
Sure, he's one of the most highly regarded writers of all time. But the really interesting thing is that we don't actually know if the man known as William Shakespeare—of Stratford-on-Avon, son of a glove-maker—was really the author of all the plays written under his name. A common argument is that a lower middle-class man such as Shakespeare could not have had sufficient education or knowledge of court matters to write so insightfully and profoundly of the human condition and of kings, much less use language so skillfully. Who could have written the plays? Frequently suggested are:

- Queen Elizabeth
- The Earl of Oxford
- Sir Francis Bacon
- A bunch of playwrights writing under one name.

Even his real birthday is unsure. (Birth records of the time are rare and unreliable.) Shakespeare was born on April 23, or maybe the 20th, or the 21st, or maybe even May 3. It's pretty certain that it was in 1564, and that he was baptized on April 26. To add to the confusion, back in Shakespeare's day there wasn't actually such a thing as standard spelling—people spelled words as they sounded. Common spellings of “Shakespeare” include “Shakespere,” “Shackspeare,” and “Shakspeare.” Furthermore, only a few samples of handwriting are thought actually to be his—plays were copied out by actors and others in the theater company to carry for rehearsals.

There are a few things about Shakespeare, however, that we do know for sure. A man known as William Shakespeare definitely was involved in the theater: His name is listed among the acting company known as the Lord Chamberlain’s Men in London, which was very popular with the people and with Queen Elizabeth. The company also built the famous Globe Theatre in London, which premiered most of Shakespeare’s plays.
Shakespeare had a son named Hamnet who died young, and is thought to have inspired the name of Hamlet. Shakespeare had two other children: Hamnet's twin, Judith; and another daughter, Susannah.

Unfortunately, the Shakespeare line ended when his granddaughter Elizabeth died in 1670, having no children of her own. Therefore, there are no descendants who kept records of the time.

Shakespeare is buried in the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon, his birthplace. On this grave there is an inscription cursing anyone who dares to move his body from that final resting place. To this day his bones remain undisturbed.

What do you think?

For Students

Look up the clues that people have collected about who Shakespeare was. Do you think there really was one man from Stratford-on-Avon who wrote all of the plays, or was the name used to cover up the real author(s)? Why would someone want to cover it up? Does any of this matter in the end?
STAGED VIOLENCE IN HAMLET: FENCING VS. DUELING

“A hit, a very palpable hit.”
Osric, Act 5, scene 2

Everything you see onstage has been planned out—every movement and every word rehearsed for weeks before the performances. With violence onstage, it must be choreographed and practiced so that, though the actors are never actually in danger, it looks like they are.

Actors who engage in stage combat for a play usually have a fight choreographer design the fight for them, choose the kinds of weapons involved, and show them how their moves must be performed safely.

DEATHS IN HAMLET (in order):

- Polonius: stabbed by a sword
- Gertrude: drinks poison wine
- Claudius: stabbed with poisoned sword, then drinks poisoned wine
- Laertes: scratched with poison-tipped sword
- Hamlet: scratched with poison-tipped sword

OFFSTAGE DEATHS (just for fun):

- Hamlet’s father: poison poured in ear
- Ophelia: drowned
- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: put to sudden death
In the 16th century, Shakespeare’s time, a typical weapon would have been the rapier, mostly used in duels between noblemen with grudges to settle. The rapier was a sharper and lighter weapon that the previously used broadsword; this left one hand free for other weapons (daggers, lanterns, anything handy), while its sharper edge made thrusting and stabbing the favored way of doing damage. Only people of noble status would have carried the rapier.

Shakespeare would have been familiar with dueling, as it was a popular way to settle arguments and defend honor among the noble classes. In fact, in Elizabethan times, laws were passed forbidding dueling because too many young noblemen were dying. (This is especially relevant in *Romeo and Juliet*.)

Fencing, however, was a traditional competitive sport, not used to settle points of honor. It was forbidden in a fencing match—and still is—to have a rapier with an actual sharp point. Fencing rapiers are made specifically with blunted tips. This is what makes Laertes’ and Claudius’ plan to have a sharpened, poisoned rapier for Laertes to use even more awful. That’s why Hamlet gets so angry when Laertes scratches him with the point of the poisoned sword—not because he knows it is poisoned (he doesn’t, yet) but because Laertes breaks the rules of the game, and Hamlet knows then that all bets are off. The swords are flung down and the two go at each other with fists.

Remember, every action you see onstage in the fight has been planned for safety and for maximum drama. That is, the characters are in danger but the actors are not. This is true in every fight or scene with weapons in use: Everything is carefully set and rehearsed before being filmed. If you are someone who likes the idea of doing this sort of thing, you can train to be a stuntman or stuntwoman for the movies—it’s a real job.
RESOURCES
HAMLET ON FILM

Since 1900, more than 50 different film versions of Hamlet have been created, testifying to the popularity of the story. While very few film adaptations use the entire text due to its length (more than four hours), they do provide accurate renditions of the original play in a wide range of styles. Here are some of the most popular and accessible versions:

**Hamlet (1948)**
Directed by Laurence Olivier
Starring Laurence Olivier, Eileen Herlie, and Basil Sydney
Black-and-white, Academy Award-winning film noir version

**Richard Burton’s Hamlet (1964)**
Directed by Bill Colleran
Starring Richard Burton, Eileen Herlie, and Alfred Drake
Filmed version of a minimalistic Broadway production

**Hamlet (1990)**
Directed by Franco Zeffirelli
Starting Mel Gibson, Glenn Close, and Alan Bates
Action movie with popular cast, enhancing female roles

**Hamlet (1996)**
Directed by Kenneth Branagh
Starring Kenneth Branagh, Julie Christie, and Derek Jacobi
Highly visual epic set in 19th century, using the full, unabridged text

**Hamlet (2000)**
Directed by Michael Almereyda
Starring Ethan Hawke, Diane Verona, and Kyle MacLachlan
Updated, modern interpretation of Hamlet set in New York City

Many other films are inspired by Hamlet’s plot, employing elements from the play to create different interpretations and stories. Some of these films include:

- **The Bad Sleep Well (1960)** Variation of Hamlet’s story set in corporate Japan
- **Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead (1990)** Based on Tom Stoppard’s play
- **The Animated Shakespeare: Hamlet (1992)** Animated made-for-TV episode
- **The Lion King (1994)** Disney’s animated classic with plot inspired by Hamlet
THE REVENGE TRAGEDY OF TODAY

There are many modern adaptations of the Revenge Tragedy genre, and other new works inspired by the original form. Some modern examples of Revenge Tragedies include:

- **Revenger’s Tragedy (2003)** Film adaptation of Thomas Middleton’s play
- **Titus (1999)** Film version of Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus
- **Law Abiding Citizen (2009)** A father seeks revenge on his family’s killer.


- **RoboCop (1987)** A good cop, Murphy, is brutally murdered by a gang whose leader is working for a corrupt corporate executive named Dick. Enough of Murphy’s body and brain are kept alive for him to form the basis of a cyborg police officer, RoboCop. Here the role of the ghost is played by Murphy’s repressed memories that reach RoboCop’s awareness and spur him to seek out whoever was responsible for Murphy’s death. After a period of scheming back and forth, as well as what we could only call madness in a robot, RoboCop ultimately kills the gang, their leader, and Dick. (Earlier in the movie, an executive is killed during what the others present took to be a mock demonstration of a deadly crime-fighting robot, the ED-209, an instance of the “death during masque/dumb show” motif of Elizabethan revenge plays, although not involving the ultimate revenge.)

- **The (original) Star Wars trilogy** Luke’s surrogate father Obi-Wan is killed by Darth Vader, and later appears to guide him in ghost form. Contrary to convention, though, the ghost does not urge him to exact bloody revenge. The two battle each other physically in the meantime, and the murderer even tries to undo the hero psychologically by telling him that the murderer is his father. The hero descends into madness and joins the dark side, then all but kills the murderer, who had just suggested that his next target would be the hero’s sister (preemptive revenge?).

- **Batman (1989)** Bruce Wayne’s parents are killed by a psychopathic criminal, Jack Napier, who Wayne plots against and is plotted against by, whether in their everyday personas or as Batman and the Joker. An extra layer of intrigue has the two competing over the same woman. The ghost role is played by the undying memories of Wayne’s parents. Batman never quite goes crazy, though he comes close to losing it, yet succeeds in killing the Joker.

- **Any mafia movie** Too countless to name, every great Mafia movie centers around a specific cultural ideal of loyalty to the family or family crime business. Revenge appears frequently in the form of rival families murdering each other over issues of shame, honor, or just plain disrespect. Sometimes members of the family will even be killed by their own if they step out of line.
Teaching Resources for *Hamlet*

Folger Shakespeare Library—massive collection of lesson plans and activities for teaching Shakespeare at all grade levels: www.folger.edu

Life in Elizabethan England:
- Elizabethan.org/compendium
- Teachit.co.uk/armoore/Shakespeare
- Snaithprimary.eril.net/ttss.htm

Activities on Shakespeare's various plot and character relationships:
- Collaborativelearning.org/muchadoplotrelationships.pdf (for *Much Ado About Nothing*, but can be adapted to any Shakespeare play)

The Kennedy Center’s “The Poetics of Hip Hop”: Artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade9-12/Poetics_of_Hip_Hop.aspx


Shakespeare retold: BBC.co.uk/drama/shakespeare

Books


“The first and most important lesson...is that there are no rules about how to do Shakespeare, just clues. Everything is negotiable.”

–Antony Sher and Greg Doran, Woza Shakespeare! 1996, on training in the Royal Shakespeare Company

Note to Teachers: This guide was created as a supplement for teachers preparing students to see California Shakespeare Theater’s production of Hamlet. Worksheets are designed to be used individually or in conjunction with others throughout the guide. While we realize that no aspect of this guide fully outlines a course for meeting a subject area's standards, discussion questions and topics are devised to address California state standards in English, Performing Arts, and History. The activities here can be minimally reproduced for educational, nonprofit use only. All lessons must be appropriately credited.

There are many excellent lesson plans for Hamlet on the Internet. Please see our “Resources” page for links. This guide concentrates primarily on ideas that help students understand language, plot, and character through activities that get students on their feet and speaking.

If you are interested in a California Shakespeare Theater Professional Development Workshop, which provides easy-to-learn tools for teachers to incorporate theater and arts education activities into California standards-based core curriculum, please contact the Artistic Learning Department at 510.548.3422 x136 or learn@calshakes.org.
OUR MISSION

We strive for everyone, regardless of age, circumstance, or background, to discover and express the relevance of Shakespeare and the classics in their lives by:

• Making boldly imagined and deeply entertaining interpretations of Shakespeare and the classics.
• Providing in-depth, far-reaching creative educational opportunities.
• Bringing disparate communities together around the creation of new American plays inspired by classic literature.

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SOCIAL NETWORKING CHARACTER

(Page 1 of 2)

Have your students create a Facebook profile following for a character from the play.

**Overview:** Being able to empathize with fictional characters sheds light on our own personal situations, and recasts the plot of the play in relevant terms.

**Grade:** 6-12

**Goal:** To bring the characters of *Hamlet* into a real-world context.

**State Standards:** English Literary Response and Analysis 3.0-3.4

**Outcomes:** Students will be able to use basic facts from the text to imaginatively enter into the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of fictional characters by creating a mock Facebook page.

**Activity:** Familiarize students with the profile layout of a social networking site page, such as Facebook. (See following examples.)

1. Ask the students to fill in the profile with:
   a. vital statistics
   b. likes and dislikes
   c. friends

**Note:** Students should use information drawn from their knowledge of the play (for example, Hamlet is dressed in black), filled out by their imaginations (for example, when Hamlet was little he always liked really sad music).

2. Profile photos may be drawn or cut out from magazines, or an actual photo of the student could be used and attached to the page. Remember, many actual Facebook profile pages do not have an actual photo of the person who made them—Facebook members sometimes choose a picture of something they feel represents them, e.g., a tree or a poster they like.

3. Share the pages you have created in student pairs or in a group discussion.

**Reflection**

- Name one thing you had to imagine about your character that you think is really interesting.
- Was it easy to imagine beyond the play—for instance, what Rosencrantz’s activities and interests might be? Or do you feel the play did not provide enough information? How so?
How easy was it to decide who your character’s friends are? Would your character ignore a friend request from other characters in the play? Why or why not?

➢ Extension exercise

**Note:** Require the students to fill out the worksheet manually, rather than actually filling out a public profile online. If you can post their mock profile pages onto your school website or blog for students to fill out within the framework of this project, that would work as well, but false profiles in a public space should be actively discouraged. Student examples should show a deep understanding of the plot and qualities of the character. Some examples follow.
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern  We made a joint page, dudes!!

➡️  Studied Improv comedy
❤️  Married to Ourselves

RECENT ACTIVITY

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern updated their status
“We made a joint page, dudes!!”

Hamlet wrote:
“You guys have been acting really weird lately”

Claudius sent Rosencrantz and Guildenstern a private message.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and Claudius are now friends

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern wrote on Hamlet’s wall.
Ophelia

O, woe is me!!

<w>Studied Singing</w>

❤ Relationship status It’s complicated with Hamlet

---

**Write something...**

---

**RECENT ACTIVITY**

Ophelia wrote: “O, woe is me!!”

Laertes wrote: “I miss you, sis”

Ophelia wrote on Hamlet’s wall

Ophelia wrote on Hamlet’s wall

Ophelia wrote on Hamlet’s wall

Polonius: “Don’t be so forward, Ophelia!”

Hamlet likes this

Ophelia likes flowers and rivers
Overview: To get Shakespeare's language immediately active.

Grade: 3-12

Goal: To demystify Shakespeare's language by putting the importance of the action over the words.

Outcome: Students will be able to relate action and language with active physical and vocal response.

Preparation: Students should be familiar with the story.

Activity:

1. Each student receives a line from *Hamlet* on an index card that corresponds to the death of one of the characters listed below.
2. They go around and read the lines out loud.
3. Then they practice their death (all together).
4. Each student individually shows his/her death while saying the line, around the circle. Order doesn't matter at this point.
5. Ask each student to then go back to the card and pick one word that signifies their imminent demise. They can be dying before the word and after the word, but on that word their voice and body must start to show that the death is very close. Extra challenge: the word cannot be the last word in the sentence.

Vocal ideas:

- Speak in choking voice
- Repeat the word
- Say the word much louder or much softer than the other words
- Say the word much slower than the other words
- Say the word with a long pause before and/or after it
- Speak the word with lots of air around it, like a sigh
- Gasp for air while saying the word

Physical ideas:

- An arm, leg or other significant body part suddenly jerks
- The entire body goes stiff
- The arms reach out as if in pleading
• The eyes grow wide and staring
• Suddenly collapse to the floor
• Slowly collapse to the floor

DEATHS IN HAMLET (in order):

1. Hamlet’s father: poison poured in ear (before play begins).
2. Actor King in the play-within-a play: poison poured in ear
   “So think thou wilt no second husband wed,/ But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.”
3. Polonius: stabbed by a sword
   “What, ho! Help! O, I am slain.”
4. Ophelia: drowned
5. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: put to sudden death.
6. Gertrude: drinks poison wine
   “O my dear Hamlet! The drink, the drink! I am poisoned.”
7. Claudius: stabbed with poisoned sword, then drinks poisoned wine
   “O yet defend me, friends. I am but hurt.”
8. Laertes: scratched with poison-tipped sword
   “Mine and my father’s death come not upon thee, Nor thine on me. Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.”
9. Hamlet: scratched with poison-tipped sword
   “The rest is silence.”
DEAR DIARY

Overview: Writing a diary, blog, or journal entry from the perspective of one of the play’s characters creates empathy with fictional characters, sheds light on our own personal situations, and recasts the plot of the play in relevant terms.

Grades: 6–12

Goal: To bring the characters of Hamlet into a real-world context.

Outcomes: Students will be able to use facts from the text to imaginatively enter into the thoughts, feelings and motivations of fictional characters by writing a diary entry about an off-stage moment from the perspective of a character in the play.

Activity

1. Ask the students to write a diary, blog, or journal entry from the point of view of a character in Hamlet, describing a moment when that character is not seen onstage. Think about: What is happening when the character is in this offstage situation? What is the character thinking and feeling?

2. Ask the students to choose a character and a moment to write about. Examples:
   - Imagine Claudius before he murders his brother. How did he convince himself to do it and how did he come to the idea of poisoning someone in the ear (a rather unusual method, and sneaky, not violent).
   - What does Hamlet do between deciding to appear insane and then actually doing so? Does he prepare? What are his thoughts at this time? (Remember he decides to appear insane rather than going ahead and killing Claudius.)
   - What is Ophelia doing and feeling between the time Hamlet tells her to “get thee to a nunnery” and when she appears insane later on?
   - How did Ophelia really die—did she intentionally commit suicide or was it an accident? Describe what her thoughts and feelings might have been as she stood by the river.
   - What was happening with Gertrude as she watched Ophelia drown?
   - Imagine Laertes’ thoughts and feelings as he prepares the poison sword for the fencing match with Hamlet. How did he get the poison? Did it cost a lot? Who did he get it from?
Reflection

- Name one thing you had to imagine about your character that you think is really interesting.

- Was it easy to imagine beyond the play—for instance, what Gertrude’s thoughts might be? Do you feel the play did not provide you with enough information? How so?

- How easy was it to decide which character to write an entry for? Are there characters you think might be more likely to keep a diary or blog?

➢ Extension Exercise

Do the same writing exercise, but have one student write about the same incident from multiple characters’ points of view. Alternatively, have many students describe the same incident from different characters’ viewpoints.

Instead of a written piece, do a vlog (video blog) from the point of view of one character, or featuring two characters talking about the incidents and expressing their opinions and feelings about what happened.
TO TWEET OR NOT TO TWEET
#THEQUESTION

Overview: Using the social network Twitter, have your students create a list of tweets from different characters, tracking their progress throughout the play. Have them go a step further to create dialogue between characters.

Grade: 6–12

Goal: To bring the characters of Hamlet into a real-world context. To increase understanding of how the characters interact and feel towards one another.

Outcomes: Students will be able to use specific facts and lines from the play to make clear the relationships between characters.

Activity: Familiarize student with the layout of a twitter post—a tweet—and its character limit (140, including spaces).

1. Ask the students to create a Twitter name for their character.
2. Ask students to create a list of tweets that their character would post throughout the play.
3. Have students create Twitter names for other characters in the play and have them talk to one another via Twitter. Examples:
   - @themaninblack: 2 B or not 2 B #thatisthequestion
   - @RosenGuild: @Hamlet let's go for a ride #Imonaboat
   - @opheliaflowergirl: Oh, woe is me #lonelygirlproblems

Reflection:

- Was it easy to decide what the characters' Twitter names were? Did you try to make the Twitter names reflect something about the character?
- Was it easy or fun to pick out lines from the play to use in a tweet?
- Were some relationships easier to convey via tweets than others? Why?
Overview: To delve into the understanding of character through translating the text into a design concept.

Goal: Students will use contextual clues and their understanding of text to inspire an original, artistic representation of the character.

Outcomes: Students will gain personal understanding of the characters by relating the text through the group process to create an original interpretation of the character.

Materials:

- A scene featuring each of the three characters being studied
- A variety of art supplies: markers, scissors, tape, etc.
- About 40 clothing items that can create a wide variety of looks
- Safety pins and/or binder clips to adjust fabric to fit
- Body templates for design sketching (see Male and Female Templates on page 51) and scrap paper for notes

HOW TO PLAY: to study one of the characters from the play in order to outfit this character in a way that reflects who they are, based on your study of the text.

1. You are provided text in the next few pages that will give character and costume clues for each person. Read the selected scene, taking note of words or character clues in the text as you go. Share with your group the images that popped out at you, seeming to best describe the character.

2. As a group, select three key words that inspire you in your design process.

3. On your own, create a rendering of your character using various art supplies and the template provided for you. Join your group again and, as a team, select one rendering to be brought to life. Elements may be combined from multiple drawings, but be prepared to explain your choices in the design presentation.
4. You will have a box of clothing including hats, shoes, skirts, etc.; choose the items that represent your character. You may also use found objects, your own clothing, and other assorted art supplies on hand.

5. One person from your team will serve as the model, one person will serve as the main presenter to tell the class what line from the text most fully embodies your look, and each member of the team must explain how the words are reflected in the clothing choices you made. The model must perform this line of text. If possible, take a photo of the model next to the design ideas to complete the activity.

Reflection:

- Were there things about the character that you did not recognize before when you were looking at the text from a designer’s perspective?
- How did your group arrive at the design concept that you ended up modeling? Did you have to make some compromises?
- When looking at the other group’s designs, what do you think they most successfully represented about their given character? When you see their word choices, what costume item most embodies one of those words to you?
- What element of the character’s costume do you find the most intriguing or thought-provoking?

Note: Students do not need to be worried about a look that would go well in a magazine, i.e., one that could have commercial appeal. It might be easy for some students to fall into this way of thinking as this kind of advertising is seen everywhere, but this exercise is only about physically embodying the character’s personality.

➢ Extension activities: Those who are interested in fashion or artistically oriented might want to base a clothing line on all of the main characters in the play, presented as a runway.

Scrapbooking or creating a collage from different magazines or drawing a costume rendering first provides the opportunity for students to share their own ideas about their character with their classmates.
QUEEN GERTRUDE
One woe doth tread upon another’s heel,
So fast they follow; your sister’s drown’d, Laertes.

LAERTES
Drown’d! O, where?

QUEEN GERTRUDE
There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men’s fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element: but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull’d the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

LAERTES
Alas, then, she is drown’d?

QUEEN GERTRUDE
Drown’d, drown’d.
KING CLAUDIUS
   How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE
   Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,
   And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
   Do not for ever with thy vailed lids
   Seek for thy noble father in the dust:
   Thou know’st ‘tis common; all that lives must die,
   Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET
   Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN GERTRUDE
   If it be,
   Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET
   Seems, madam! nay it is; I know not ‘seems.’
   ‘Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
   Nor customary suits of solemn black,
   Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
   No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
   Nor the dejected ‘havior of the visage,
   Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
   That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,
   For they are actions that a man might play:
   But I have that within which passeth show;
   These but the trappings and the suits of woe.
Pictured: Students from Northern Light school in Oakland, designing Ophelia’s death scene from *Hamlet* in the exercise “Shakespeare’s Runway”; photo by Trish Tillman.
Male and Female Templates
PROFILING: CLAUDIUS AND HAMLET AS MURDERERS

(p. 1 of 4)

Overview: Popular TV shows about crime more than ever involve the character of a profiler—a particularly intuitive detective—who can accurately describe the perpetrator of a crime and the criminal’s next move, particularly in the case of violent crime.

Grade: 6–12

Goal: To investigate psychological patterns of behavior as presented by the text in order to realize specific actions of each character and deepen understanding of personal motivation.

Outcomes: Students will create a complete psychological profile of Claudius or Hamlet from defining their activities as murders, and predicts future behavior (had they lived).

Activity:

Criminal profiles are usually created to determine how to apprehend a criminal at large. In the case of Hamlet the play, since we know who committed the murders and how they did it, we will take a step back to imagine the criminal as if we did not know them. We will examine the available evidence (murder weapons, evidence of premeditation, places where the murders took place) and the murderer’s actions to determine character traits that are not immediately obvious from the text. We are imagining the criminal only from the events, not from the omniscient audience knowledge of who the murderers are.


   An FBI profiler is a person who analyzes criminal cases for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in order to get a psychological, behavioral, and legal profile of a criminal. The art of criminal profiling revolves around compiling a personality of the criminal and in-depth analysis based on how the crime was committed. Since most FBI profilers are trained in psychology, another responsibility the profiler has is to interview convicted felons to gain insight into the motives and patterns of other criminals.

2. Develop the offender profile.

   The analysis procedure listed below is used to help identify the traits of an unknown criminal in order to capture the criminal. Use this sheet and the example following to build your criminal profile of 1., the person who murdered Claudius, Laertes, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern; and 2., the person who killed King Hamlet and Queen Gertrude.
Worksheet: FBI Profile Analysis

Adapted from Practical Police Psychology with Dr. Laurence Miller, http://www.policeone.com/investigations/articles/1719635-Criminal-profiling-in-serial-homicide-investigations/:

The FBI’s Crime Scene Analysis consists of six steps:

1. **Profiling Inputs** All potentially relevant evidence is collected from the crime scene, including physical evidence, photos, investigator notes, and reports of witness interviews.

2. **Decision Process** Models Evidence is organized, studied, and analyzed to discern patterns and commonalities that can link the crime to other and yield clues to offender detection.

3. **Crime Assessment** From this pattern analysis, investigators attempt to reconstruct the crime scene, including a time-line of events and the role each person present, whether perpetrator, victim, or bystander.

4. **Criminal Profile** Steps 1-3 are combined to create a criminal profile incorporating the motives, physical qualities, personality, and behavioral tendencies of the perpetrator. This profile is also used to guide interview strategies for different types of suspects.

5. **Investigation** The working profile is distributed to active investigators on the case and to any other individuals and organizations that may have databases or information pertinent to identifying the suspect. If few useful leads are turned up, new incoming information may be used to revise and update the profile.

In creating your profile, try to give as complete a description of the perpetrator as possible, including gender, age, race or ethnicity, intelligence level, education, military service, job status, living circumstances, nature of interpersonal relationships and social contacts. Regard these descriptive statements as hypotheses that you will test against accumulating information. Many of these hypotheses will simply be generalizations based on your training and experience, while others may be more intuitively arrived at by mentally playing out the crime in different scenarios and imagining what sort of person would be involved. Then, match these hypotheses to your local and regional criminal databases to see if any further identifying leads come up.

Depending on the volume of the data and nature of the case, your final written profile may range from a few paragraphs to many pages. Finally, disseminate your profile to investigators and local law enforcement. If no useful leads or clues develop, be willing to update and revise the profile as new data come in. Training, experience, creativity, and flexibility are the keys to effective case solving.
EXAMPLE SHEET:

Possible answers for Step One of Criminal Profiling Exercise.

1. **Profiling Inputs:** All potentially relevant evidence is collected from the crime scene, including physical evidence, photos, investigator notes, and reports of witness interviews.

**Title:** Criminal Profile for five murders determined to be by the same perpetrator.

**Victims:** Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, friends of Hamlet; Polonius, advisor to Claudius; Laertes, son of Polonius; and Claudius, King of Denmark.

**Description of Murders:**

1. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were executed in England by order of a letter from the King of Denmark, which turned out to be forged.

   **Witnesses:** none.
   **Location:** The forgery took place on a ship from Denmark to England.

2. Polonius was stabbed to death behind a curtain while calling for help against a perceived attack on Gertrude by her son.

   **Witness:** Gertrude, Queen of Denmark.
   **Location:** The Queen's bedroom, or “closet.”

3. Laertes was killed by a poisoned, illegally-sharpened rapier in a fencing match.

   **Witnesses:** Osric, several courtiers.
   **Location:** the hall of Elsinore Castle of Denmark.

4. Claudius was run through by a rapier and then forced to drink wine that had just killed his wife the Queen by being poisoned.

   **Witnesses:** Osric, several courtiers.
   **Location:** the hall of Elsinore Castle of Denmark.

**Weapons:** None of the weapons were personally owned by this criminal except for the dagger that killed Polonius. The letter was political, the rapier that killed Laertes and Claudius has been determined to be sharpened by another person, and the wine was also poisoned by another person.

**Locations:** This criminal has access to international travel as well as access to both public and private areas of the royal castle. This suggests a rich and intimate member of the castle’s
inhabitants.

**Conclusions from Step 1:** This person committed an unusual combination of very impulsive acts of violence as well as carefully prepared murders. Additionally, each murder in itself contains an element of calculated premeditation and of spontaneous rage. Clearly the criminal was prepared to defend himself by carrying a dagger, but rashly stabbed Polonius without even knowing who he was, as Polonius was behind a curtain. Laertes was killed after breaking the rules in a fencing match by having a pointed sword, which the criminal used to dispatch him. Claudius was killed immediately thereafter with the same sword, then forced to drink poison wine on top of it, which indicates unusual anger. The most intelligent and carefully planned murder was that of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who were accompanying the criminal to England for a vacation on orders of the King. They were carrying a sealed letter demanding the immediate execution of the criminal with them, but the criminal found the letter and forged another to replace his name with that of his supposed friends, who were indeed executed on arrival as the criminal made his way back to court.

**Teachers:** Continue this work through the next outlined steps of the process. You may need to adapt or change the amount of detail you wish to go into according to the amount of time you have or the classes’ needs.

**Reflection:** After concluding reports have been finished, discuss what was surprising or interesting that the data revealed about Hamlet or Claudius. For instance, it is interesting to note that Hamlet seems to prefer taking the opportunity at hand in terms of weapons and the actual killings, rather than planning out over a long term what he was going to do (even though he talked so much about it). So what does it mean when one’s actions and thoughts are not on the same track? Claudius, on the other hand, seems the exact opposite in his methods of killing.

- **Extension activity:** Who or what is responsible for Ophelia’s death? Is the poor treatment she received at the hands of her boyfriend to be considered? Why did Gertrude watch Ophelia drown and not try to stop her?
### BRUSH UP YOUR SHAKESPEARE

#### Reference Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>addition—title</td>
<td>title</td>
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<tr>
<td>affined—bound by duty</td>
<td>bound by duty</td>
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<tr>
<td>alarum—call to arms</td>
<td>call to arms with trumpets</td>
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<tr>
<td>anatomize—to analyze</td>
<td>to analyze in detail</td>
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<td>ancienct—ensign</td>
<td>ensign</td>
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<td>anon—until later</td>
<td>until later</td>
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<td>arrant—absolute</td>
<td>absolute</td>
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<td>aroint—begone</td>
<td>begone</td>
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<tr>
<td>assail—to make amorous</td>
<td>to make amorous siege</td>
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<td>attend—to await</td>
<td>to await</td>
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<tr>
<td>aye—yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>baffled—to hang up</td>
<td>to hang up (a person)</td>
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<td>by the heels as a mark</td>
<td>of disgrace</td>
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<td>baggage—strumpet</td>
<td>strumpet, prostitute</td>
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<td>barne—the froth on ale</td>
<td>the froth on ale</td>
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<td>believe—maybe</td>
<td>maybe</td>
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<td>belov’d—beloved</td>
<td>beloved</td>
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<td>blank—a target</td>
<td>a target</td>
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<td>bolted—refined</td>
<td>refined</td>
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<td>fine, handsome</td>
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<td>bum—backside, buttocks</td>
<td>backside, buttocks</td>
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<td>caitiff—a wretched</td>
<td>humble person</td>
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<td>Cousin 'coz—relative,</td>
<td>relative, good friend</td>
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<td>a cure</td>
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<td>fustian—wretched</td>
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<td>got—begot</td>
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<td>grammacy—thank you</td>
<td>thank you</td>
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<td>halter—noose</td>
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<td>prostitute</td>
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<td>mayhap—maybe</td>
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<td>meal, food</td>
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<td>minister—servant</td>
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<td>nay—no</td>
<td>no</td>
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<td>ne’er—never</td>
<td>never</td>
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<td>office—service or</td>
<td>service or favor</td>
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<td>favor</td>
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<td>oft—often</td>
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<td>passing—surprisingly,</td>
<td>exceedingly</td>
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<td>perchance—maybe</td>
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<td>perforce—must</td>
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<td>politician—schemer</td>
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<td>post—messenger</td>
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<td>prithee—please</td>
<td>please</td>
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<td>quest—a jury</td>
<td>jury</td>
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<td>recreant—coward</td>
<td>coward</td>
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<td>resolve—to answer;</td>
<td>reply to</td>
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<td>reply to</td>
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<td>but soft—be quiet</td>
<td>simply</td>
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<td>soundly—plainly</td>
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<td>stale—harlot</td>
<td>harlot</td>
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<td>subscription—loyalty,</td>
<td>loyalty,</td>
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<td>allegiance</td>
<td></td>
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<td>tax—to criticize; to</td>
<td>accuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>accuse</td>
<td></td>
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<td>troth—belief</td>
<td>belief</td>
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<tr>
<td>teem—to give birth</td>
<td></td>
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<td>thee—you (informal)</td>
<td>you (informal)</td>
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<td>thou—you (informal)</td>
<td>you (informal)</td>
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<td>thy—you (informal)</td>
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<td>tucket—trumpet flourish</td>
<td>trumpet flourish</td>
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<td>verge—edge,</td>
<td>circumference</td>
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<td>circumference</td>
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<tr>
<td>verily—truly</td>
<td>truly</td>
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<td>villain—common person,</td>
<td>person, not noble</td>
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<tr>
<td>not noble</td>
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<td>want—lack of, don’t have</td>
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<td>well—a day—alas</td>
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<td>wherefore—why</td>
<td></td>
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<td>yea—yes</td>
<td></td>
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<td>zounds—by his (Christ’s)</td>
<td>by his (Christ’s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>wounds</td>
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YOU’RE THE CRITIC:
CAL SHAKES PLAY CRITIQUE

( Elementary and Middle School )

NAME: ________________________________

1. Circle the number of stars that best matches how you’d rate this performance. (One star is the lowest rating and five stars is the best rating.) Then write a paragraph on the back of the paper that specifically describes why you gave it that rating. Do not simply say “I didn’t like it,” but say why. For example, “I didn’t like the fact that the director changed the setting to New York” or “I loved the way the actors made me believe that they were really going to kill each other.”

★★★★★

Star rating: ____ stars

2. Outline the main actions that happened in the plot (what were the big events in the story?).

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.
3. What is the central idea or theme of the play?

4. Describe what the actors did to help you understand the Shakespearean language.

5. What did you particularly like or dislike about the staging (set design, lights, costumes, music, etc.)?

6. Shakespeare writes about feelings that we all experience. In Hamlet, we see people with feelings like love, jealousy, anger, frustration, and others. Pick one of these emotions that you’ve experienced strongly and write what happened in your life to make you feel that way and what happened because of it.
YOU’RE THE CRITIC: CAL SHAKES PLAY CRITIQUE

(Middle and High School)

Give this production a rating of 1 to 5 stars. (One star is the lowest rating and five stars is the highest.) On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph review of the play. In other words, describe why you gave it that rating. Give specific examples to support your reasons. On the same sheet of paper, reflect on the following questions:

| ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |

Star rating: ___ stars

1. How would you describe the character of Hamlet as he is portrayed in this production?

2. Does Shakespeare give any reasons as to why Hamlet delays so long in taking action? What justifications can you find?

3. Why are we still staging this play 400 years since Shakespeare wrote it? Why do you think the director chose this play?

4. Which character did you sympathize with most? Why?

5. Think about and describe:
   i. The vocal and physical actions of the actors (characterization)
   ii. The set
   iii. The costumes
6. What do you think are some of the themes of the play?

7. Did the elements of characterizations, set, and/or costumes reinforce any of these themes?

8. Shakespeare writes about things that we all experience: love, jealousy, death, anger, revenge, passion, misunderstandings, etc. Write a paragraph about one big emotion in the play that you’ve also experienced in your life.

9. Now, imagine you are the director of *Hamlet*, and use a new sheet of paper to create your new production.

   • Cast the characters of Hamlet and Ophelia with famous actors. Why would you choose these two people?

   • Many directors set Shakespeare plays in time periods other than the Renaissance. What other setting could you place the play in that would make sense? Why?

   • How about costumes? Imagine how the characters in your new production would be dressed that would illustrate the kinds of characters they are and what setting you have put the play in.