

Kentucky Shakespeare Presents

Hamlet - Spring Tour

Study Guide

Grades 6th - 12th



Hear it. See it. Do it!



Dear Educator,

Thank you for choosing Kentucky Shakespeare to enrich your students' lives with Art Education! We know that the arts are essential to a child's educational experience and development. It is our object to keep the arts alive and thriving in our schools and communities.

This comprehensive Study Guide includes essential background information on Shakespeare and his era, his written works, pre/post performance activities, and a list of applicable Academic Standards that are met with this Spring Tour performance. While giving additional arts related experiences, these teacher-led activities are intended to broaden students' understanding of the play as well as how Shakespeare can relate to our own lives.

Please contact us with any questions or need for further assistance. Thank you for supporting the Commonwealth's largest in-school arts provider and the United States' oldest, free Shakespeare festival!

All Our Best to You,

Kyle Ware
Director of Education

Hannah Pruitt
Director of Creative Engagement

Kentucky Shakespeare
616 Myrtle St.
Louisville, KY 40208
Office 502-574-9900
Fax 502-566-9200
education@kyshakespeare.com
www.kyshakespeare.com

Table of Contents

- Synopsis.....Page 3
- William Shakespeare.....Page 4
- Shakespeare's Plays.....Page 5
- Theatre Vocabulary.....Page 6
- Plot.....Page 7
- Artists's Questions.....Page 8
- About *Hamlet*.....Page 11
- Characters.....Page 12
- Play Vocabulary.....Page 13
- Themes.....Page 14
- Activities.....Page 15
- Links.....Page 16

Academic Standards

TH:RE7.1.6-8, TH:RE8.1.6-8, TH:RE9.1.6-8,
TH:CN10.1.6-8, TH:CN11.1.6-8, TH:CN11.2.6-8,
TH:RE7.1.I-III, TH:RE8.1.I-III, TH:RE9.1.I-III,
CN10.1.I-III, TH:CN11.1.I-III

RL.6.3, RI.6.4, SL.6.1B, RL.6.7, RL.7.3, RL.7.4,
RL.7.5, SL.7.1C, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, RL.9-10.3, SL.9-
10.1C, SL.9-10.1D, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.6, RL.9-
10.1, RL.11-12.3, RL.11-12.4, RL.11-12.7



Spring Tour Synopsis

In this 90-minute production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, our professional actors create an experience that keeps Shakespeare relevant and accessible. It is a wonderful opportunity for Shakespeare-lovers and those not as well acquainted with his work to experience the language and see a live performance of his words. This tour emphasizes conflict resolution, efficient communication, and how quickly ambition can turn the best intentions into bad ones.

How can we both make this be the most efficient and successful performance?

- If in person, then we ask that you create an environment conducive to a positive interaction with your students including an **open space** for our Artist Educators to perform where students can easily see the performance.
- We have provided these activities for both **pre- and post-workshop discussion**. They are a fun and an engaging way to enhance learning and allow students to make the most of their arts experience with us.
- It is of utmost importance not only to your students but to our Artist Educators as well that there are **adult school staff members present in the room whether in-person or virtual** throughout the workshop. Students tend to have less distractions and are more encouraged to engage in the performance with familiar adult presences in the room.

William Shakespeare

(April 23, 1564 – April 23, 1616)

His Life

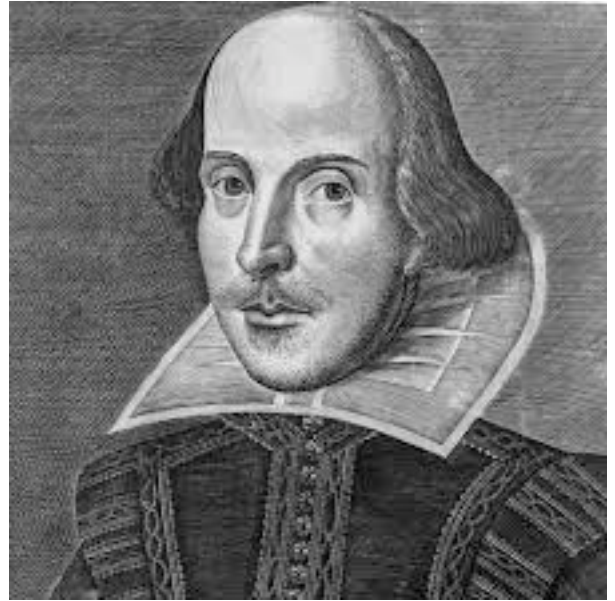
- Born and raised in Stratford-upon-Avon
- Married Anne Hathaway at age 18 and had three children: Susanna and twins Hamnet and Judith
- Between 1585 and 1592, he began a successful career in London as an actor, writer, and part owner of the playing company the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men
- Appears to have retired to Stratford around 1613, where he died three years later

His Works

- An English poet and playwright
- Often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon" (or simply "The Bard")
- His surviving works consist 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and several poems
- His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more than those of any other playwright
- Produced most of his known work between 1590 and 1613
- His plays are often categorized into 3 genres: comedy, tragedy, and history
- In 1623, a few of his former theatrical colleagues published the First Folio, a collected edition of his dramatic works that included all but two of the plays now recognized as Shakespeare's
- Reputation did not rise to its present heights until the nineteenth century

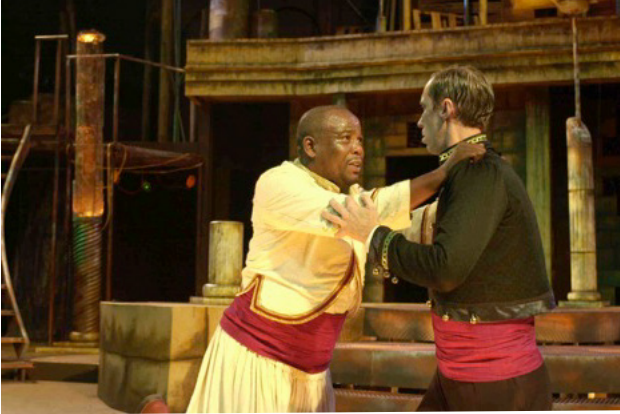
Examples of Words from Shakespeare's World

- Alack — expression of dismay
- Anon — soon
- Ere — before
- Hath — has
- Hence — away
- Naught — nothing
- Thence — away, over there
- Whence — where
- Wherefore — why



Shakespeare's Three Styles of Plays

Tragedy



Shakespearean tragedies were formulaic in style and used traditional conventions. These tenets included:

- A character who seeks to avenge a crime committed against a family member or a personal injustice
- A tragic character whose own flaw leads to their downfall
- An end that contains a revelation of self-knowledge about how their own frailty brought on their and others' downfall

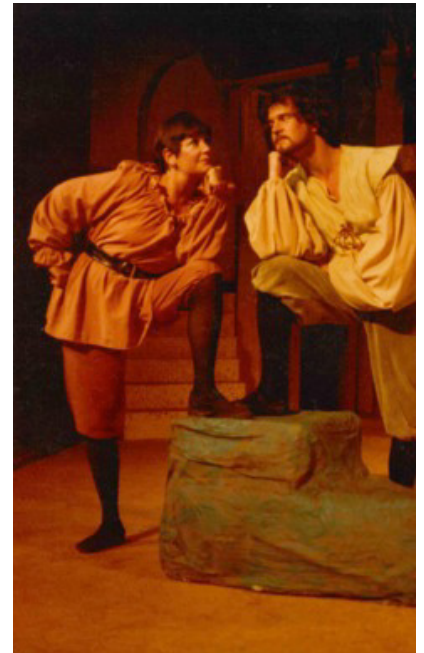
Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Hamlet, Julius Caesar, King Lear, Macbeth, Othello, Romeo & Juliet, Timon of Athens, Titus Andronicus

Comedy

“Comedy” in the Elizabethan era had a very different meaning from modern comedy. A Shakespearean comedy is one that has a happy ending, usually involving marriage, and a tone and style that is more lighthearted than Shakespeare's other plays. Shakespearean comedies tend to have:

- A struggle of young lovers to overcome difficulty (often presented by elders)
- Separation and unification
- Mistaken identities
- A clever servant
- Heightened tensions, often within a family
- Multiple, intertwining plots
- Frequent use of puns

All's Well That Ends Well, As You Like It, The Comedy of Errors, Cymbeline, Love's Labours Lost, Measure for Measure, The Merry Wives of Windsor, The Merchant of Venice, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado About Nothing, Pericles- Prince of Tyre, Taming of the Shrew, The Tempest, Troilus and Cressida, Twelfth Night, Two Gentleman of Verona, Two Noble Kinsman, Winter's Tale



History



Shakespeare's “history” plays are those plays based on the lives of English monarchs and brought massive audiences to the theatre. It is important to keep in mind that these plays are based only loosely on historical figures rather than actual events in history. The 10 plays that are categorized as histories cover English history from the twelfth to the sixteenth century particularly 1399-1485. The histories usually include elements of comedy and tragedy.

King John, Richard II, Henry IV Parts I and II, Henry V, Henry VI Parts I, II and III, Richard III, Henry VIII

BASIC THEATRE VOCABULARY

Actor- Individual who pretends to be a character in a play; who represents a character in a play.

Blocking- The pattern of movement the actors follow while on stage.

Characters- The personalities or parts actors become in a play; roles played by actors in a play.

Climax- The point of highest dramatic tension or a major turning point in the action of a play.

Conflict- The opposition of persons, forces, or ideas that gives rise to the dramatic action.

Costumes- The clothing worn by the actors to play the characters.

Dialogue- The words spoken by the actors during a play.

Empathy- The capacity to relate to the feelings of another.

Exposition- The part of a play that introduces the theme, main characters and circumstances.

Falling Action- The action after the climax of the plot.

Interpretation- To explain or tell the meaning of something; to present in understandable terms.

Monologue- A speech made by a single character; often when a character is “thinking out loud.”

Motivation- An incentive or an inducement for further action for a character.

Playwright- The individual who writes a play.

Plot- What happens in a play; the order of events, the story as opposed to the theme; what happens rather than what it means.

Resolution- The solution to the problem after the climax in a play.

Rising Action- The portion of the play from the beginning to the climax, where the action increases in intensity and excitement.

Role- Part/ character/ person written by a playwright.

Setting- Where a play takes place in time, space, or location

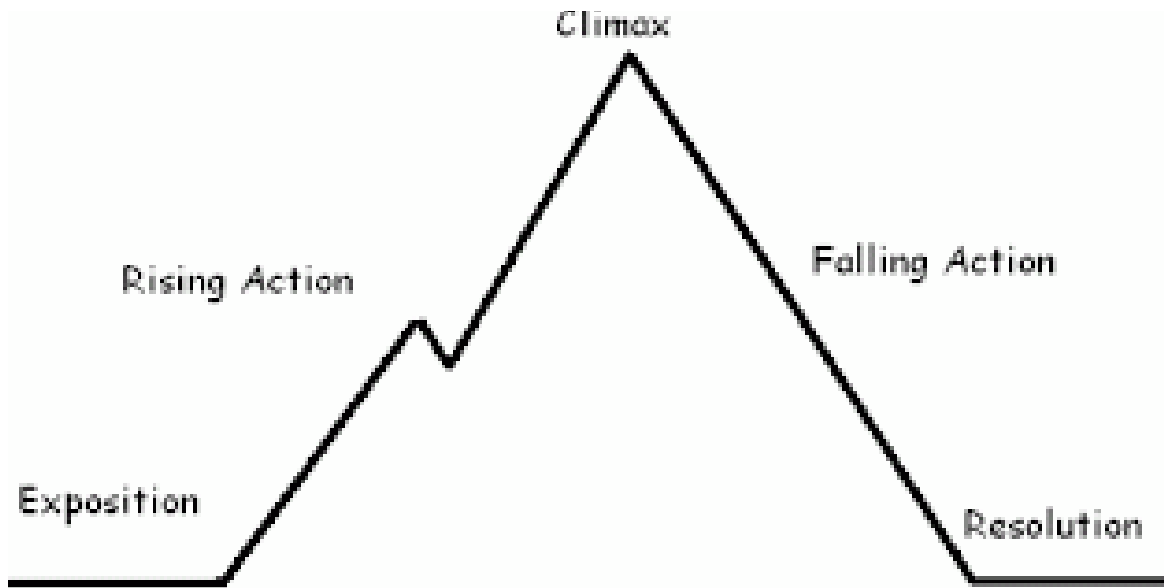
Script- The play in written form.

Stage- The area where the actors perform the play.

Theme- What the play means as opposed to what happens; the main idea or message within the play.

Turning Point- The moment in a play when events can go either way; the moment of decision; the crisis.

Dramatic Structure of a Play's Plot

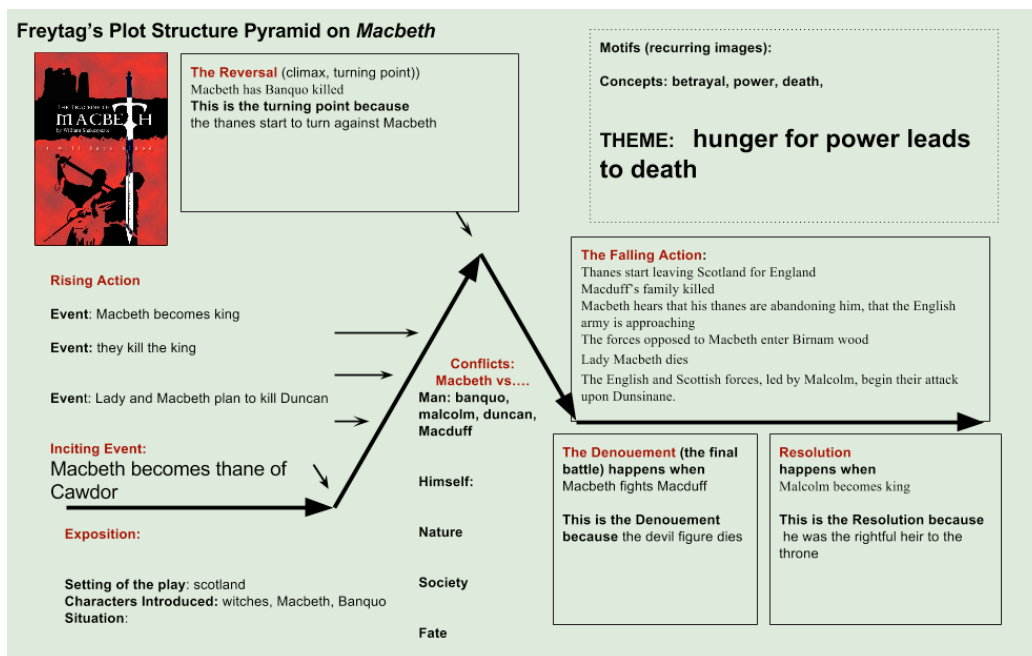


Freytag's Pyramid

Freytag's Pyramid illustrates the five parts of the classic dramatic plot: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. This pattern was suggested by Gustav Freytag in 1863 as means to explain the plot of many works such Shakespeare's collection of plays.

Please use the vocabulary from the previous page for your students to fill out their own Plot Diagram for *Hamlet*.

An example from *Macbeth* is provided below:



Artist's Questions

Shakespeare used very few stage directions, which are clues in the script for the actors and director to follow during productions. An example would be, "*Actor crosses downstage right to table.*" The way that Shakespeare handled stage directions is that he left clues about the characters, relationships, and scenery in the lines of the play.

Use the provided scene from *Hamlet* or choose your own, read it aloud, and use the Artist's Questions below to explore the possibilities of the text. Based on your discoveries from the questions, make decisions about what the set, scenery, and costumes might look like as well as what you notice about the characters.

ARTIST'S QUESTIONS

1. WHO AM I?

How old am I? Am I rich or poor?
What is my job? Am I in school?
What is my family like? Where am I from (country, state, etc.)?
Am I nice? Funny? Smart? Mean? What is my personality?

2. WHERE AM I?

County - State - City - Neighborhood - Building - Room
What does the place look like? Do I like it or not?

3. WHAT TIME IS IT?

Century - Year - Month - Week - Day - Time

4. WHAT ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SCENE?

People in the scene?
People mentioned in the scene?
The place where they are?
The objects around them?

5. WHAT IS WRONG IN THIS SCENE? IS THERE A PROBLEM? (Conflict)

6. WHAT DO I WANT IN THIS SCENE? (Goal) WHY CAN'T I HAVE IT? (Obstacles)

7. WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO GET WHAT I WANT? (Tactics)

Hamlet
ACT III, Scene i

HAMLET

--Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

OPHELIA

Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day?

HAMLET

I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

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

Ha, ha! are you honest?

OPHELIA

My lord?

HAMLET

Are you fair?

OPHELIA

What means your lordship?

HAMLET

That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should
admit no discourse to your beauty.

OPHELIA

Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than
with honesty?

HAMLET

Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner
transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the
force of honesty can translate beauty into his
likeness: this was sometime a paradox, but now the
time gives it proof. I did love you once.

OPHELIA

Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAMLET

You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot
so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of
it: 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: I am very
proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at
my beck than I have thoughts to put them in,
imagination to give them shape, or time to act them
in. 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 a nunnery.
Where's your father?

OPHELIA

At home, my lord.

HAMLET

Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the
fool no where but in's own house. Farewell.

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

O heavenly powers, restore him!

HAMLET

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God
has given you one face, and you make yourselves
another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and
nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness
your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath
made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages:
those that are married already, all but one, shall
live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a
nunnery, go.

Exit

OPHELIA

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

Hamlet Synopsis

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is home from school to mourn the death of his father, King Hamlet. Hamlet is disgusted by the marriage of his newly widowed mother, Queen Gertrude, to his uncle, King Hamlet's brother, Claudius, who now has the throne.

A ghost appears to the castle guards and to Hamlet's friend, Horatio, who thinks the spirit looks like the former King Hamlet. Horatio asks Hamlet to see for himself and the ghost beckons Hamlet to follow him. The ghost reveals that Claudius poisoned him in the ear. Hamlet vows to avenge his father's murder.

Meanwhile, Laertes, son to the King's advisor, Polonius, is set to return to France. Before he leaves, he tells Ophelia, his sister, to be wary of Hamlet's affections towards her. Polonius gives Laertes advice on how to act abroad and orders Ophelia to stay away from Hamlet.

Hamlet's actions and behaviors begin to be questioned by all. Polonius suggests it is Ophelia's rejection of his advances. Claudius and Polonius decide to spy on Hamlet and Ophelia. Claudius also brings in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two childhood friends of Hamlet, to spy on him as well. Hamlet quickly realizes their intentions and takes his anger out on all of them.

A troupe of players happens to be in town and Hamlet utilizes the actors to determine the validity of his father's murder. He will have them perform a play whose story is similar to his father's death. He asks Horatio to watch Claudius' reaction throughout the play. While the court is watching, Claudius is enraged and leaves the play convincing Hamlet that he is the murderer.

Hamlet meets Gertrude in her room and an argument ensues. When he hears Polonius who is hiding behind the curtain shout for help, he stabs him thinking it is Claudius. The ghost appears to Hamlet to refocus him on the task of killing Claudius.

Claudius demands that Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern head for England. Claudius has sent a letter with them ordering Hamlet's execution during the trip. While at sea, however, Hamlet discovers his planned murder and switches the orders, causing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to be executed. Hamlet returns to Denmark.

Meanwhile back at Elsinore, Ophelia has gone mad with grief. Laertes returns from France and learns it was Hamlet who has killed his father, Polonius. Claudius suggests that Laertes duel with Hamlet and poisons the tip of Laertes' sword for a fatal blow. If Laertes loses the duel, then Claudius will put poison into a drink for Hamlet. Gertrude enters and announces that Ophelia has drowned.

During the duel, Gertrude accidentally drinks from the poisoned cup and dies. Hamlet is wounded with the poisoned sword, but in a scuffle, the swords are switched. Laertes is also wounded with the poisoned sword. In dying, Laertes confesses Claudius' plot to kill Hamlet. Hamlet stabs Claudius and Hamlet dies asking Horatio to tell his story.



Who's Who in *HAMLET*

The Major Players

Hamlet- Prince of Denmark, son of the dead King Hamlet. He has returned from school to mourn the death of his father and finds that his Uncle Claudius has married his mother, Gertrude, and become King instead. Hamlet seeks revenge for his father's death and is determined to do and behave however he needs in order to discover the truth.

Gertrude- Queen of Denmark, who along with the late King Hamlet, are the parents of Prince Hamlet. She has recently married her brother-in-law, Claudius, and has become his Queen. It is uncertain whether she knows the truth of her first husband's end but she is worried about her son's actions and health.

Claudius- the current King of Denmark, who secretly betrays Hamlet's father (Claudius' own brother) and marries Hamlet's mother. He is afraid that Hamlet is catching onto his bad deeds.

Polonius- an advisor in the Court to Claudius as well as father of Laertes & Ophelia. He is someone who enjoys giving advice and seeks to remain an important member of the court under Claudius' rule.

Ophelia- a lady of the Court and daughter of Polonius as well as Laertes' sister. Before the play begins, she is in love with Hamlet but upon his return and strange behavior, she agrees not to see Hamlet anymore because of her father's wishes.

Laertes - son of Polonius and brother to Ophelia. He has strong loyalties to his family. When he returns from abroad to find his family in ruin, he takes up responsibility for avenging them.

Horatio- Hamlet's friend from school who is very sensible and loyal. He first tells Hamlet about the Ghost and remains his true ally throughout the play.

Ghost- the spirit of Old King Hamlet, father of Hamlet and Gertrude's former husband. The Ghost demands Hamlet seek revenge for him.

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern- two friends of Hamlet from school that Claudius brings in to spy on Hamlet for him. They believe that they are there to help but Hamlet figures out the motives behind their presence in Elsinore.

Vocabulary

Below are selected words from HAMLET that will assist in the comprehension and background knowledge for the production.

Apparition- a supernatural being like a ghost

Fashion- popular trends in styles of clothing but also in manners or behavior; something associated with a specified place or people

Foil- a sword used mainly for the sport of fencing

Foul- having a bad smell or taste; something wicked or unfair; an action or mistake that is harmful to yourself or others

Honest- someone who speaks the truth or does the right thing; used to persuade others of the truth of something

Nature- the world around us including plants, animals, and the humans on the earth; what makes up a person's character or personality

Remembrance- a memory or recollection; an item kept to remind you of someone

Revenge- the goal to hurt someone because of something wrong done to you

Spirit- what makes a person who they are - emotions, characteristics, behavior, etc.

Vow- a promise

Woe- a feeling of great sadness; the thing that causes troubles

Wretched- a person in a very unhappy or unfortunate state; very bad

Wrong- untrue, dishonest, or mistaken; doing something that is unfair or unkind to another



Themes

One of the brilliant things about Shakespeare is that each of his plays is rich with themes that are central to the human experience. When a director approaches a Shakespearean text, they must choose which themes to emphasize. The following themes are important to this interpretation of *Hamlet*.

Healthy Relationships

This play examines several kinds of love and the relationships people can have with each other - love between a couple (Hamlet & Ophelia), relationships between family members (Fathers and Daughters, Mothers and Sons), and even the respect that you have for your self.

Questions: How can these types of love make a person act differently or from how they would normally behave? Is changing for someone else in order for them to love you healthy? What are some warning signs from the play that display unhealthy relationships early on? How do they evolve throughout the play? Have you ever been put in a situation by someone that you care about that doesn't ring true to who you are?

I.E. Is it fair that Polonius forbade Ophelia from seeing Hamlet again? Should Gertrude have reached out to Hamlet sooner to check on his feelings and mental health? Did Hamlet ever consider what committing acts of revenge would do to him or how it would affect his own self-respect?

Conflict Resolution

The characters in this play all approach how to resolve their problems in different ways. It manifests itself through Hamlet as he denies the grieving process for his father and continues down his path of destruction which in the end, will never bring his father back from death. Hamlet struggles with whether to act on the impulse of his emotions throughout the play. For Ophelia, she embraces the instability and pain that comes with the belief that she is all alone. Every path seems hopeless without a person to turn to that she trusts. Both resolve in needless, disastrous results.

Questions: What alternatives could the characters in this play employ to resolve their problems? Are there resources that they had that they did not utilize? What were their motivations that led to poor decisions and outcomes - grief, emotions, isolation, denial? How could this tragedy turn out much happier and safer for everyone?

Steps to Resolve Conflict:

1. Identify the Problem.
2. Focus on the Problem.
3. Attack the Problem, NOT the Person.
4. Listen with an Open Mind.
5. Treat a Person's Feelings with Respect.
6. Take Responsibility for Your Actions.

Ambition & Appearances

The characters in this play often assume the personas that will be most helpful to their plots and strategies. In the world of the play and, indeed, society as a whole, those who display a sense of drive and passion to further their lot in life are praised as being ambitious. When people share their weaknesses or vulnerability, it can open the door for those who would exploit those traits. This play turns these assumptions on their head and allows us to weigh the cost and effects of what putting on a persona can bring you.

I.E. Claudius appears to be a calm and tactical ruler, but in fact, he is consumed by ambition and is eventually destroyed by it. Hamlet, on the other hand, chooses to embrace what others view as faults to get closer to the truth even at the cost of his own integrity and the safety of others.

Questions: What are the benefits of being ambitious? What are the risks? Is being vulnerable in order to exploit others defensible? At what point does forcing the version of yourself that gets you what you want at the cost of others become unacceptable to your loved ones or society as a whole?

Pre-Show and Post-Show Activities for Exploration

Please complete the following activities before & after the performance.

Before the Performance

1. Familiarize your students with *Hamlet* and discuss with your class the parts of this play- characters, themes, plot, etc. What are their expectations of experiencing this performance?
2. Examine the major themes of *Hamlet*. For each theme, have the students list examples from their own lives and from the modern world around them. Prepare the students to look for these themes in the performance and discuss how they relate or do not relate to their own lives. Can you think of any pieces of art that are based on, connected to, or inspired by this play or these historical events? What do they have in common and how to they differ?
3. What types of technical theatre are needed for the performance including sets, props, costumes, sound, and lighting? Find specifics from the script and add some of your own to the list. How do these elements add to the experience? What do you expect from our Spring Tour of this show that has to adapt to many different locations?

Don't forget to prepare some questions for the Q&A with the Actors! Some suggestions may be:

- How do you prepare to play multiple characters?
- What sort of training or education do you need to be an actor or to be involved in theater?
 - What would you do if you felt that you had no one to turn to about a problem?
 - What's your favorite play written by William Shakespeare?
 - What kind of roles are your favorite to portray on stage?

After the Performance

4. Discuss how Hamlet manipulates those around him to either distract them from his goal or use them to get what he wants. What tactics does he use? What kind of relationship does he have with these characters? How were you able to figure out the truth of these relationships from the actors' performances?
5. If Shakespeare were to write a play about your life, then what would it be? A comedy, a tragedy, a history, or some combination? Explain your choice and try writing the plot outline with Freytag's Pyramid for your life thus far.
6. Write a letter to one of the characters in the play and give them some helpful advice. Pick a spot in the play where they believe that the tragic ending could still be stopped. What could they do to avoid these events? What resources could help or even save them?
7. Compare the physical choices the actors made in the play to what their characters were saying in the scenes. Give three examples of how their physical choices- space, pace, levels, etc. enhanced the impact of their performance. Is there a choice that you would've made differently? What would it have been and why?

Shakespeare Links & Resources

Type the word Shakespeare in a search engine and you will find a plethora of information on him, his works and his environment. Show your students that the internet can be a great way to research and gather valuable information - especially when you can't find it at your local library. We also recommend watching the theatrical versions of some of the scenes they will experience in the *Hamlet* Spring Tour for comparison and chance to open up discussion about their comprehension of the choices made.

www.absoluteshakespeare.com
Comprehensive Resource of Works

www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=618
The Folger Shakespeare Library

www.penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/
The Penguin & Signet Classic's Teacher Guide

Do you have students that may be in need of help, someone to talk to, or a community? We encourage you to share these Resources with them, so they know that they are never alone and always have someone who can be there for them.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Dial 988

Toll-free, 24-hour, confidential hotline that connects you to a trained counselor at the nearest suicide crisis center.

TXT 4 HELP

Resource for abuse, bullying, family problems, depression, suicidal thoughts, and others. Text the word "safe" and your current location (address, city, state) to **4HELP (44357)**. Within seconds, you will receive a message with the closest Safe Place site and phone number for the local youth agency. For immediate help, reply with "2chat" to text interactively with a trained counselor.

Classroom Challenge:

Write a letter to the Kentucky Shakespeare Professional Actors who performed in the *Hamlet* performance. Describe what you liked about the performance and how it helped to see Shakespeare be performed rather than just reading it. Describe what you did, saw, and heard.

What was your favorite part?

Mail to:
Kentucky Shakespeare
616 Myrtle St.
Louisville, KY 40208

or

Email to: education@kyshakespeare.com