

HAMLET

HAMLET
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
DIRECTED BY PETER PASYK

GRADE RECOMMENDATION

Grades 8 and up.

CONTENT ADVISORY

Explores mature themes, including suicide. Contains some sexual innuendo and the depiction of violence.

STUDENT MATINÉE DATES

April 23,28; May 6, 8, 13, 14*, 20, 22; June 4*, 10, 17, 25;
September 3, 11, 15, 18, 23, 30; October 6, 9, 14, 21, 22.
(* = Performance starts at 12:30 p.m.)

FUN FACT!

“To be or not to be” is the most quoted phrase in the English language.

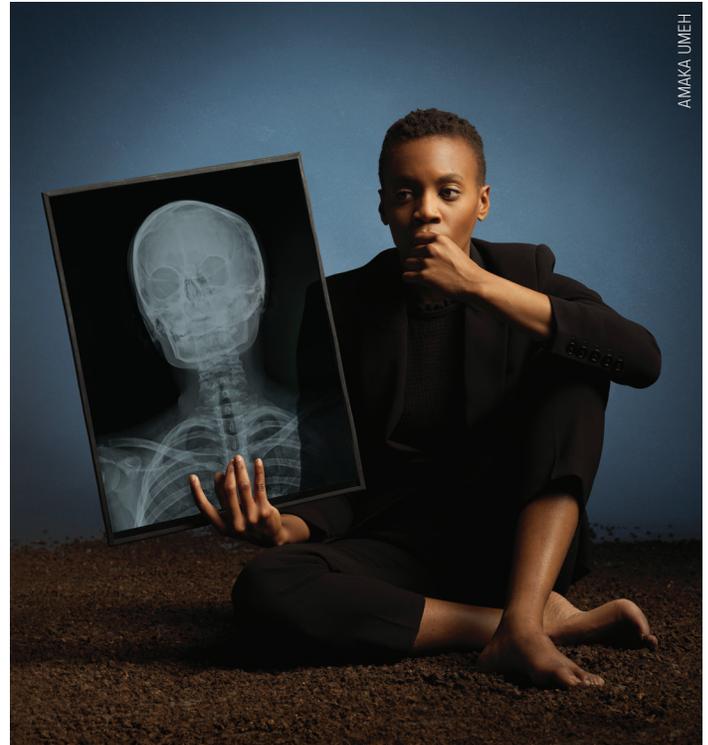
SYNOPSIS

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is in mourning for his dead father, the king. He’s also disturbed by how quickly his mother, Gertrude, has remarried – and by the fact that her new spouse is Claudius, her late husband’s brother (and thus Hamlet’s uncle).

Hamlet’s disgust at this hasty marriage, which has also robbed him of his succession to the throne, turns to fury when his father’s ghost appears and reveals that he was murdered by Claudius. Vowing revenge, Hamlet decides to feign madness until an opportunity presents itself. Polonius, the lord chamberlain, thinks that Hamlet’s strange behaviour springs from love for his daughter, Ophelia, but Claudius soon begins to suspect otherwise.

The arrival of a travelling theatre company gives Hamlet the idea of re-enacting his father’s murder to startle Claudius into revealing his guilt. Claudius is indeed shocked by the performance, but Hamlet’s triumph is short-lived; while arguing with his mother in her bedroom, he stabs an eavesdropper hiding behind a curtain, only to discover that it is Polonius he has killed, not Claudius.

Claudius sends Hamlet to England, secretly intending to have him put to death there. Meanwhile, Ophelia, driven mad by grief at being rejected by her lover, Hamlet, and upon hearing that her father was murdered by Hamlet, commits suicide. Hamlet escapes, however, and returns to Denmark, whereupon Claudius urges Laertes to challenge him to a fencing match, in which Laertes will secretly poison the tip of his sword. But when both combatants receive mortal wounds, the dying Laertes reveals the plot, whereupon Hamlet kills Claudius before succumbing to his own inevitable fate.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GLOBAL COMPETENCIES:

- Creativity
- Learning to Learn/Self-Awareness
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Critical Thinking
- Global Citizenship

GRADE 8:

- The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Art, Media Arts and Multimedia Technology).
- Health and Physical Education (Understanding Healthy Concepts, Making Healthy Choices, Making Connections for Healthy Living).
- Language (Oral Communication, Reading, Writing, Media Literacy).

GRADES 9–12:

- The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Integrated Arts, Media Arts, Visual Arts).
- Language/English (Oral Communication, Reading, Writing, Media Studies).
- Health and Physical Education (Understanding Healthy Concepts, Making Healthy Choices, Making Connections for Healthy Living).

GRADES 11–12:

- Social Sciences and Humanities (Dynamics of Human Relationships, Equity and Social Justice, Gender Studies, Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology, Philosophy, World Religions and Belief Traditions in Daily Life).

GRADE 12:

- Canadian and World Studies (World History Since the 15th century).

THEMES

- Disorder, Death and Afterlife: the impossibility of certainty, the nature of existence, the supernatural
- Sickness and Corruption: madness and melancholia
- Power and Politics: family, public vs. private, appearance vs. reality
- Action vs. Inaction: entrapment, confinement, responsibility and freedom
- Good and Evil: honour and revenge, sin and virtue, love and sex, incest and desire, misogyny

THREE KEY FIGURES TO LOOK FOR IN HAMLET

CHARACTERS	Hamlet	Claudius	Ophelia
ADJECTIVES	Indecisive	Deceptive	Trusting

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: UNDERSTANDING HAMLET'S TRUE FEELINGS (ACT 1, SCENE 2)

1 class period (approx. 60 minutes)

OBJECTIVE: Students will use the elements of drama to develop character and fashion the action in a piece of text in ensemble presentations.

INSTRUCTIONS: Teachers will need to make copies of the speech listed below, with the noted divisions, and distribute copies to each group, who will work on constructing meaning and devising an image.

RESOURCES: Handout copies of the soliloquy (see attached separate page), pens, pencils, notebooks.

Hamlet's first soliloquy (a speech spoken by a character who is alone in Act 1, scene 2, reveals a lot about his true feelings and thoughts.

1. As a class, read the speech in chorus (all students read their excerpt together). Discuss the nature of Hamlet's dilemma.
2. Divide the class into eight groups and assign one section of the speech below to each group.
3. Next, have them rewrite their section in their own words.
4. Each group will then give their section a title or caption, similar to a newspaper headline, that best describes what that section is all about. Then have each group create a tableau (one still image) for their section of text.
5. After a suitable rehearsal period (approx. 20 to 25 minutes), have the groups come together to read their sections aloud, share their captions and strike their tableau poses. Upon completion, have the students share their findings and thoughts about the character.

Extension Activity: After students present their images and contemporary excerpts, have the class determine a title/headline for each image. Then connect back to Hamlet's thoughts and feelings.

POSSIBLE ESSAY QUESTIONS, REFLECTIONS OR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. How does this speech compare with Hamlet's first interaction with Claudius earlier in the scene?
2. What was your first impression of Hamlet in the court scene and in this soliloquy? Are they similar or different and why?
3. What words in Shakespeare's text stood out for you? Why?
4. What one word would you give that best captures the essence of this piece?

EDUCATION ENRICHMENT

Study Guide available at stratfordfestival.ca/studyguides

Prologues (interactive presentations on stage) are available at 11 a.m. on: April 28; May 6, 8, 13, 20, 22; June 10, 17; September 18, 23, 30; October 9, 14, 21.

Workshops and post-show chats may be arranged by calling the Education Department at 519.271.4040, ext. 2354.

Festival Theatre, Costume and Props Warehouse, Archives and Set Changeover tours may be arranged by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE AND THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

Live theatre is a magical experience shared and respected by all: both by audience members and performers. The actors feed off your energy and your response to their work on stage.

Here are a few things to help everyone maximize their enjoyment of the performance:

- If you leave the auditorium, you will be re-seated at an appropriate time during the performance.
- Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices during the performance.
- Please refrain from talking or eating during the performance.
- Please do respond to the performance through laughter, tears or captivated smiles.

Here's some more information on [theatre etiquette](#).

BOOKING INFORMATION

Online: www.stratfordfestival.ca/schools

Email: groups@stratfordfestival.ca

Phone: 1.800.567.1600 or 519.273.1600

Mail:

Stratford Festival
Attn: Groups and Schools
P.O. Box 520
Stratford, ON N5A 6V2

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Tools for Teachers sponsored by



The Tools for Teachers program includes
Prologues, Study Guides and Stratford Shorts

Production support is generously provided by John & Therese Gardner

HAMLET

ACT 1, SCENE 2 (EXCERPT)

GROUP # 1

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter.

GROUP # 2

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

GROUP # 3

Fie on't! ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.

GROUP # 4

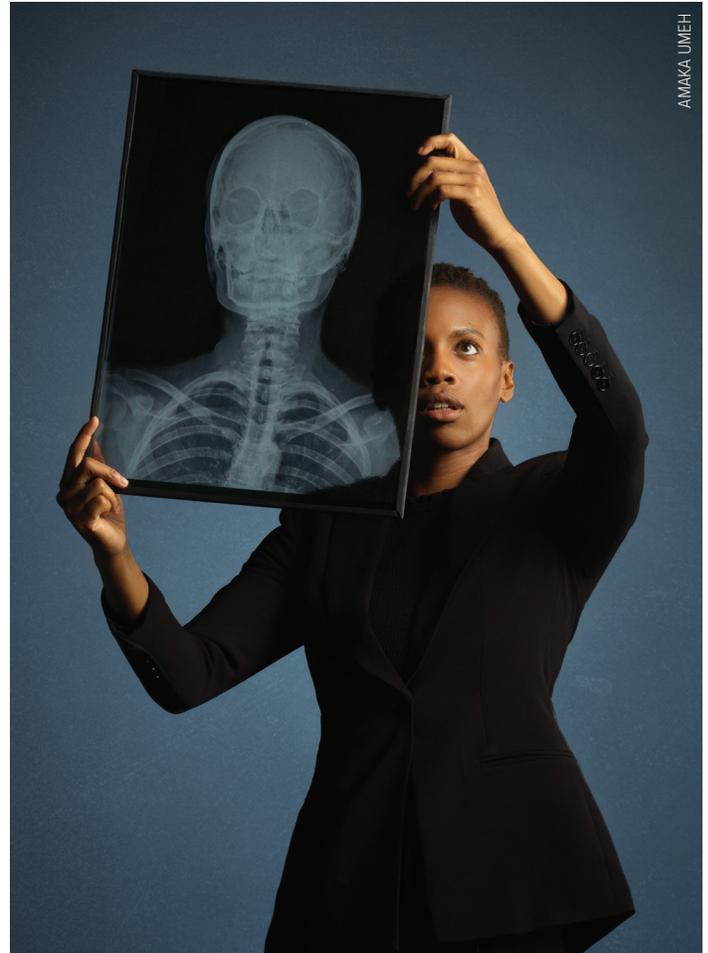
That it should come to this!
But two months dead – nay, not so much, not two.
So excellent a king, that was, to this
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,
Must I remember?

GROUP # 5

Why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on, and yet, within a month –
Let me not think on't! Frailty, thy name is woman! –

GROUP # 6

A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body
Like Niobe, all tears – why she, even she –
O, God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourned longer –



GROUP # 7

married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules. Within a month,
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her gallèd eyes,
She married.

GROUP # 8

O most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not nor it cannot come to good.
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.