



RUBICON THEATRE COMPANY
THE REGION'S PROFESSIONAL THEATRE COMPANY



HAMLET

STUDY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

How to use this Study Guide?

This packet contains a variety of information and activities to help you prepare your students for their trip the theatre. Although it is not necessary to review all the material with your group we do encourage you to share the sections indicated in the table of contents that have been marked with an asterisk. We feel that these pages will be most valuable for your students to not only enjoy the play but understand what it means to be in the audience of a live performance and what is expected of them.

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*Be sure to review these chapters with your students before you come to the theatre.

RUBICON THEATRE COMPANY

STUDENT MATINEES

THEATER ETIQUETTE

PLEASE REVIEW WITH YOUR STUDENT GROUP BEFORE YOU ATTEND THE THEATRE.

Thank you for "crossing the Rubicon," and exposing your students to live professional theatre. To assist you in preparing your students for the experience, we have created some guidelines which we hope may be of use.

Live theatre is different from the experience of attending a rock concert, where the performers may "break the third wall" and interact with the audience. At rock concerts, it might be acceptable for an audience member to get up and go talk to someone else in the audience, or to leave to bring concessions back into the auditorium. This is not the case in the theatre.

At a small theatre such as ours, there is no enhancement from microphones. Hence, it is essential that the audience refrain from talking, scraping chairs, rustling papers and the like. More important, the story and the message are in the language, not in the visuals, close-ups and/or special effects - and that requires a careful ear. Audience members must concentrate on what is being said, and the distractions of extraneous noise interfere with concentration.

Theatre is also different from television or movies. At a movie, if you leave to get popcorn or whisper to someone sitting next to you, it doesn't disrupt the performance or distract the performers. In the theatre, the audience becomes the "other character in the play." The actors can feel when an audience is with them. Often a performance is improved or heightened when an audience is intensely involved in the action or words of the play. The audience helps shape the experience.

Good live theatre also tends to present complex characters and issues. Like poetry, the enjoyment of which requires thought and later discussion, live theatre is often best appreciated after the program is over. Audience members then have a chance to think about how characters change over the course of the play, how the resolution of the conflicts conveys the playwright's and the director's views, or how specific lines delivered by specific characters affect our own view of the world differently. Live theatre, therefore, should be discussed afterward; and to discuss with insight, the audience needs to listen carefully.

Live theatre is an "intimate" experience. Because we are close to the actors, who, if they are good, are portraying powerfully the deepest human emotions, we are able to feel that emotional tenor ourselves. Concentrating on what the actors are feeling enhances an audience's enjoyment.

Many of our participating schools have thoughtfully prepared and trained their student body to be a good live audience. If you are one of those schools, we thank you for the work you have done. If you are not sure, the following are some suggestions we know other schools have found effective:

1. There shall be no late seating. All students and staff should arrive by 9:30 a.m. and be seated before the program begins.
2. Instruct your teachers and chaperones to sit throughout the theatre with the students. The presences of an adult is sometimes enough to remind students to behave.
3. The opening and closing of doors, for whatever reason, creates distraction and can disrupt the performance. Therefore, once the performance has started no one will be allowed to leave the theatre unless it is an emergency, so be sure to advise your group use the restroom before the performance begins and then again at intermission.
4. Encourage positive audience participation; applause and laughter appropriate to the action are expected. They are to refrain from catcalls and any response which is likely to distract others. Remind them of the importance of listening carefully.

5. During the intermission, Rubicon will provide your group with free bottle of water and a granola or breakfast bar. Please note that there is only one per person.
6. There is no gum, food or drink allowed in the theatre.
7. The use of cell phones, pagers, i-Pods and the like is strictly prohibited. Students found using these devices during a performance will be asked to surrender these items to the usher until the completion of the performance at which time they will be returned.
8. The taking of photos, with or without a flash and the use of any recording device is prohibited by law and strongly enforced at our theatre.
9. If you haven't already done so we invite you to use the contents of this study guide to prepare your students in advance. Students who have previous exposure to the subject matter through in class discussions and exercises are more likely to be an attentive audience. One remarkable teacher who brought her students to see our production of Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* instructed her class to read only the 1st and 2nd acts of the play and then write their own version of the 3rd act envisioning how play would end. The students did not know the true outcome of the play until they saw the performance. It proved to be a very exciting and engaging experience for all.
10. Before you arrive at the theatre ask the students to think about three questions they would like to ask the actors during the post-show "talkback" session. Direct them to stay away from questions that might be inappropriate. For example questions about an actor's age or marital status. Instead, help them focus on questions that directly relate to the play, its characters and themes. Students may also be interested to know more about the technical and scenic elements of the performance.
11. At the end of the performance a Rubicon representative will provide you with an evaluation packet containing feedback forms for both you and your students. We truly want to hear about your experience and ask that you work with your students to fill out the forms and send them back to us at the following address: Rubicon Theatre Company, 1006 East Main Street, Ste. 300, Ventura, CA 93001 Attn: Brian McDonald.

Finally, on behalf of the entire Rubicon Outreach Committee, I thank you for your participation and look forward to personally welcoming you to Rubicon. If we can be of help to you, or if you have ideas regarding how we can make this a better experience for your students, please let our school Liaisons know. You can also contact me at bmcDonald@rubicontheatre.org or by calling (805) 667-2912 ext. 234.

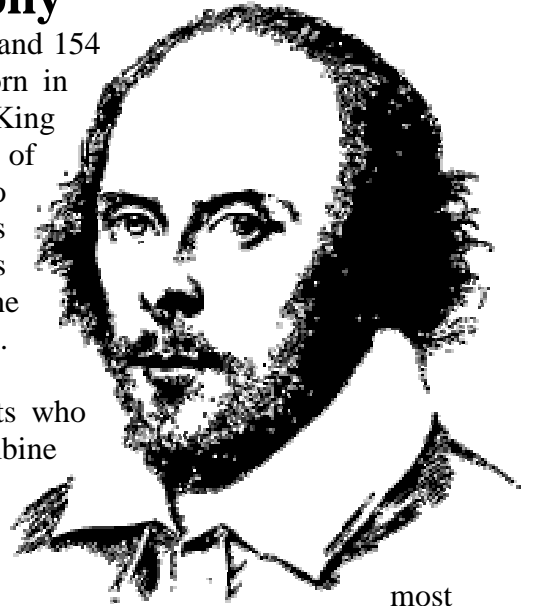
Thank you again for your continued interest and support.

Sincerely,
Brian McDonald
Associate Producer/ Outreach Director

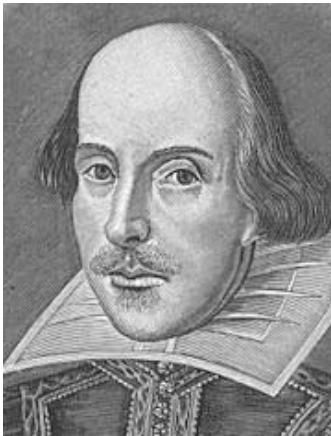
William Shakespeare: A Brief Biography

William Shakespeare (1564 –1616) wrote approximately 38 plays and 154 sonnets in his lifetime, as well as a variety of other poems. Born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare is believed to have attended King Edward VI Grammar School in central Stratford. At the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, with whom he had two children. After the birth of his two children in 1585, he disappears from all existing historical records until the 1590's, when he shows up in records as a reputable actor, playwright, and part-owner of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a popular London-based theatre company.

William Shakespeare is counted among the very few playwrights who have excelled in both tragedy and comedy, and his plays combine popular appeal with complex characterisation, poetic grandeur and philosophical depth. Shakespeare's works have been translated into every major living language, and his plays are continually performed all around the world. In addition, Shakespeare is the most quoted writer in the literature and history of the English-speaking world, and many of his quotations and neologisms have passed into everyday usage in English and other languages.



most



Hamlet: PLOT OVERVIEW

Plot summary courtesy of Wikisummaries: Free Book Summaries.

Outside Elsinore Castle in Denmark, two months after the death of King Hamlet, a ghost has begun haunting the night. The watchmen who discover the ghost show Horatio, a friend of Prince Hamlet's, who suggests they show the prince. King Hamlet's ghost tells Hamlet that he was murdered by his brother Claudius, and begs Hamlet to avenge his murder. Claudius is currently the king, having married the former King Hamlet's wife Gertrude and taken the throne.



Hamlet is determined to take revenge. Mired in doubt, he decides to pretend to be insane. His mother, Queen Gertrude, and his stepfather, King Claudius, enlist two of Hamlet's friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to discover what's wrong with Hamlet.

Polonius, Claudius' closest advisor, suspects that Hamlet may be mad with denied love for Polonius' daughter Ophelia. Claudius and Polonius decide to spy on Hamlet while he talks to Ophelia, and Hamlet rejects her.

An acting troupe arrives at the castle. Hamlet decides to use the players to discover if Claudius is truly guilty. He directs the actors to enact a play depicting the supposed events of King Hamlet's murder, as told by the ghost. True to Hamlet's expectations, Claudius jumps up when the murder is shown, and quickly leaves the room.

Hamlet plans to kill Claudius, but when he finds him praying, he changes his mind and decides to wait and kill him later, [Claudius, by praying, guarantees his own entry into Heaven; Hamlet wants to make sure Claudius goes straight to Hell for his sins.]

Soon after, Hamlet and his mother Gertrude talk in her private room. He tells her about his suspicions and scolds her for her disloyalty to his father, not realizing that Polonius is hiding behind the curtain. He hears a noise and immediately stabs the intruder to death, believing it to be the King. After accidentally killing Polonius, Hamlet is sent away to England immediately. However, the King has secretly arranged for Hamlet to be killed, by sending sealed letters with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Shortly after setting sail, they are attacked by pirates. Hamlet manages to escape and return to Denmark. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern continue sailing for England, unaware that Hamlet has switched out the sealed letters they carry with orders that they be put to death instead.

Scorned by Hamlet and orphaned by Polonius' death, Ophelia loses her



mind. Her brother Laertes returns from France, determined to avenge the death of his father Polonius. His heartbreak and anger intensifies when Ophelia drowns shortly after his return. Claudius convinces Laertes to seek his revenge against Hamlet. Together they scheme to arrange a fencing match between Laertes and Hamlet, [wherein Laertes will cover the tip of his sword with poison with which to kill Hamlet.] If Hamlet wins, the King will supply a poisoned cup from which Hamlet may drink.



Shortly after returning to Denmark, Hamlet chances upon Ophelia's funeral and is stricken with grief, insisting that he always loved her. Back at the castle, the sword-fighting match begins between Laertes and Hamlet. Hamlet is initially winning. Queen Gertrude drinks to his success and is killed by the poisoned cup. Meanwhile, Laertes wounds Hamlet. They accidentally exchange swords, and then Hamlet wounds Laertes. When Hamlet perceives that he, Laertes, and Gertrude have been poisoned, he stabs Claudius with the poisoned blade and makes him drink the rest of the poisoned drink. Laertes absolves Hamlet of guilt in his and Polonius' murder. Laertes, Hamlet, and the King all die within a few minutes of one another.

Major Character Chart

- **Hamlet**, *Prince of Denmark*, the title character, is the son of the late King, also named Hamlet. He is just back from Wittenberg, where he was a sometime student at the university.
- **Claudius**, *King of Denmark, Hamlet's uncle*. He succeeded to the throne upon the death of his brother, the old King Hamlet. He also, in short order, married Gertrude, his brother's widow, Hamlet's mother. He is revealed to be the killer of King Hamlet.

Gertrude, *Queen of Denmark, Hamlet's mother* widowed by King Hamlet's death, she rather too quickly wedded Claudius. In Shakespeare's England, marriage to the brother of one's deceased husband was considered incest by the Church.

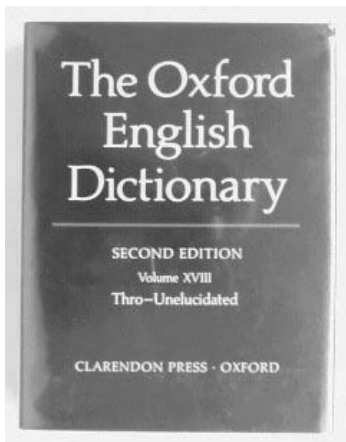
- **Ghost** *appearing to be Hamlet's father, the former king* may be an evil spirit. The old king has died recently, so his spirit, while suffering in Purgatory, could be walking at night, vexed and vengeful.
- **Polonius**, *counsellor to the king* is Claudius's chief advisor and father to Ophelia and Laertes. He is old, and often humorously played as fatuous and long-winded.
- **Laertes**, *son of Polonius* is a young aristocrat, who has been living in Paris and comes home for the coronation of Claudius. "Laertes" is the name of Odysseus's father in Homer's epics.
- **Ophelia**, *daughter of Polonius*. She and Hamlet have had a romance, although whether it was mainly in the form of letters, gifts, and significant looks, or had advanced further, is not clear. She is later driven mad by her father's death.
- **Horatio**, *Hamlet's friend and fellow-student* from Wittenberg. Apparently a Dane, he had come to Elsinore for old Hamlet's funeral and has stayed on. He is viewed as a "scholar", and converses easily with almost everyone in the court, from the guards to the royals. Horatio is the only character with whom Hamlet converses freely for the majority of the play.
- **Rosencrantz, Guildenstern**, *former schoolfellows of Hamlet*. If they knew him at university, it must have been a while ago, as they seem not to know Horatio, recently from Wittenberg. Both their names were extant in Denmark at the time Shakespeare composed *Hamlet*, so he could have obtained them from a number of sources.
- **Fortinbras**, *Prince of Norway*. He is the son of King Fortinbras, who was killed in battle by Hamlet's father, so he, too, has vengeance on his mind. His firm and decisive action contrasts with Hamlet's procrastination. His name means "strong arm".
- **Osric** is a courtier, "full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse," who referees the sword fight between Hamlet and Laertes.

Words Invented by Shakespeare

During Shakespeare's day, much as today, the world was changing rapidly and new words had to be invented to describe this changing world. Today, journalists, music and rap stars, scientists, internet users and others constantly come up with new words, which include blog, e-mail, texting, f'shizzle, peeps, bling, and a long list of words that are inappropriate for print in this study guide.

Words that are first credited to Shakespeare include:

Addiction	Admirable	Aerial	Amazement	Anchovy	Arch-Villian
Asassination	Baseless	Bedazzle	Belongings	Birthplace	Bloodstained
Bloodsucking	Catlike	Cold-blooded	Colorful	Countless	Cruelhearted
Dalmation	Dewdrop	Dexterously	Downstairs	Employer	Engagement
Epileptic	Exposure	Eyeball	Fashionable	Foul-mouthed	Full-grown
Go-between	Hostile	Impartial	Invulnerable	Laughable	Madwoman
Majestic	Misquote	Never-ending	Overpower	Overrate	Priceless
Retirement	Savagery	Schoolboy	Successful	Tardiness	Useless
Vulnerable	Weird	Well-behaved	Worn out	Yelping	Zany



Common phrases first credited to Shakespeare include:

- “Come what may”
- “Full circle”
- “Double, double, toil and trouble”
- “Hearts of gold”
- “It was Greek to me”
- “Lend me your ears”
- “Love is blind”
- “My own flesh and blood”
- “Rhyme nor reason”
- “Too much of a good thing”
- “Woe is me”

FAMOUS QUOTES

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

I must hold my tongue.

Frailty, thy name is woman.

Thrift, thrift, Horatio.

Neither a borrower nor a lender be.

This above all – to thine own self be true.

There are more things in heaven and earth,
Horatio, than are dreamt of in your
philosophy.

Words, words, words.

Brevity is the soul of wit.

Thou this be madness, yet there is method
in't.

What a piece of work is a man.

I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count
myself a king of infinite space, were it not
that I have bad dreams.

The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the
conscience of the king.

To be or not to be – that is the question.

Get thee to a nunnery.

The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

My offence is rank, it smells to heaven.
The rest is silence.

My words fly up, my thoughts remain
below. Words without thoughts never to
heaven go.

Do you think I am easier to be played on
than a pipe?

I will speak daggers to her, but use none.

Alas, poor yorick! I knew him, Horatio.

The cat will mew, and dog will have his
day.

A hit! A very palpable hit!

Good-night, sweet prince, and flights of
angels sing thee to thy rest.

Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove
unkind.

To hold, as t'were, the mirror up to nature.

There is nothing either good or bad, but
thinking makes it so.

All that lives must die, passing through
nature to eternity.

There's rosemary, that's for
remembrance...and there is pansies, that's
for thoughts.

A little more than kin, and less than kind.

I am but mad north-north-west. When the
wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a
handsaw.

