



# Hamlet

William Shakespeare  
retold by Virginia Evans  
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# THE CHARACTERS



## HAMLET

Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark. He is in deep sorrow because his father died recently and his mother has married his uncle, Claudius.

Hamlet believes that Claudius murdered his father and he wants to get revenge. He is a clever young man but he appears to be indecisive and hesitant at times.

## CLAUDIUS

Claudius is the new King of Denmark. He is Hamlet's uncle and also stepfather.

Claudius is an evil, calculating politician driven by his desire for power. However, he occasionally shows signs of human feeling.



## GERTRUDE

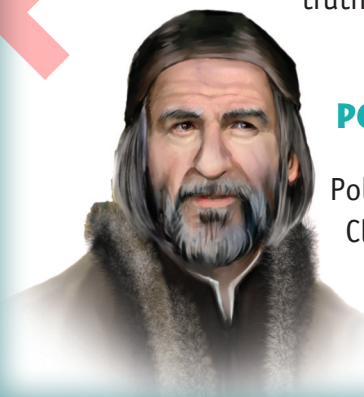
Gertrude is Hamlet's mother and the Queen of Denmark. She was married to King Hamlet but she later married his brother, Claudius. She loves her son deeply but she is a rather weak woman, unable or unwilling to face the truth.



## THE GHOST

The ghost is Hamlet's father. He claims to have been murdered by Claudius and asks Hamlet to avenge his death.

It is not clear from the beginning whether the ghost is what it appears to be or a devil sent to tempt Hamlet into murder.



## POLONIUS

Polonius is the most important person in Claudius' court. He is a conniving old man, father of Ophelia and Laertes. Polonius is completely trusted by the King, to whom he is loyal, even servile at times.





## OPHELIA

Ophelia is Polonius' daughter. She is a beautiful young woman with whom Hamlet has been in love. She is sweet and innocent and always obeys her father and her

brother, Laertes. Though she is dependent on men, it is men's plots that eventually prove fatal for her.

## LAERTES

Laertes is the son of Polonius and brother of Ophelia, whom he loves very much. He spends most of his time in France but he returns to Denmark to fight Hamlet.

Passionate and quick to action, Laertes appears to be far more decisive than reflective Hamlet.



## HORATIO

Horatio is Hamlet's close friend from university. He is very loyal throughout the play, supporting and helping his friend. He lives to tell Hamlet's story.



## ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are two of Hamlet's old friends. They are invited to the castle by Claudius to find out the

cause of Hamlet's strange behaviour.

Aware of their true intentions, Hamlet treats them coldly before finally avenging them.



## FORTINBRAS

Fortinbras is the Prince of Norway. His father was killed in battle by Hamlet's father, and the two countries were enemies. Claudius makes peace with

Fortinbras, who pays a special tribute to Hamlet at the end of the play.







## 1. The New King

In a big room in Elsinore Castle, Claudius, the new King of Denmark, was giving a speech to the court.

"We are all sad that our beloved King is dead," he said. "He was my brother, and I loved him dearly. However, by marrying our beautiful Queen I have balanced sorrow and joy. Let us not forget that Prince Fortinbras of Norway threatens to attack Denmark," Claudius continued. "Therefore, I have asked his uncle, the present King of Norway, to stop his nephew's plans."

At this moment, Laertes walked up to the King and bowed.

"And now, Laertes, son of good Polonius," said Claudius, "what is it that you want?"

"My lord, I wish to have your permission to return to France," replied Laertes. "I came back to Denmark to see you crowned King, but now I wish to go back again."

"He has my permission. Please let him go, my lord," said Polonius.

"Then I too give you permission, Laertes, to return to France."

Hamlet, the young Prince of Denmark, watched King Claudius and Queen Gertrude silently.

"Hamlet!" cried Claudius. "Why are you still mourning?" He beckoned Hamlet to come closer, and the Prince walked slowly up to the King and Queen.

"Good Hamlet," said his mother the Queen, "don't be so depressed and feel sad for your noble father forever. You know that all living creatures die one day and pass to eternity."

"Yes, Mother, I am aware of this," said Hamlet.

"So why, then, do you still seem so sad?" Gertrude asked her son.

"I do not seem sad, Madam, I am sad," replied Hamlet.





"Every son loses a father," Claudius said, "but to go on mourning is stubbornness. Please, stop feeling sad but try to think of me as a father and you as a successor to the throne. Stay with us and do not go back to your studies in Wittenberg."

"Yes, dear Hamlet, stay with us." Gertrude echoed the King's words.

"Very well, Mother, if you wish it," said Hamlet.

The court rose, and he was left alone, deeply frustrated.

"O God! If only I could stop existing! How meaningless the whole world seems to me! How could she come to this? My father, not even two months dead, so excellent a king, so loving to my mother, and she has married again. A beast would have mourned longer. And married with my uncle! How weak women are!"

At that moment, Hamlet's friend, Horatio, and two guards entered the room.

"My good friend!" exclaimed Hamlet.

"My lord Hamlet, I bring some news for you. I think I saw your father last night."

Hamlet was quite astonished, but Horatio assured him that he and the guards had seen a figure like the King on the battlements of Elsinore Castle. It was wearing armour and stood silent.

"I will watch tonight. Perhaps it will walk again," said Hamlet, convinced.

When Horatio and the guards went, he was left to his thoughts.

"My father's spirit wearing armour! I have a feeling he may have been murdered. I must be patient until the night comes. Then all evil things will be revealed."



## Episode 7

### Before Reading

- 1 Look at the title and the pictures. What do you think is happening in this episode? Is Hamlet doing what he is expected to do?

### While Reading

- 2 Read or listen to the episode and mark the sentences as *T* (true) or *F* (false).

- 1 Hamlet is pleased with Gertrude. ....
- 2 Gertrude thinks Hamlet is being rude. ....
- 3 Gertrude tries to leave the room. ....
- 4 Hamlet sees something moving behind the door. ....
- 5 Hamlet thinks the one hiding is Claudius. ....
- 6 Hamlet kills Polonius. ....
- 7 Gertrude sees the ghost. ....
- 8 Hamlet trusts Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. ....

### After Reading

- 3 Discuss in pairs:

- 1 Do you think Hamlet shows disrespect for his mother? Why does he call her a "stepmother"?
- 2 Do you think Gertrude realises her fault finally?
- 3 What do you think is going to happen in the next episode?

### Think!

Why do you think Shakespeare chooses not to have Gertrude see the ghost? In three minutes write a few sentences on the topic. Read your sentences to the class.

## Episode 8

### Before Reading

- 1 Look at the pictures.

- 1 What do you think is going on in the first picture? How is it related to the title?
- 2 What appears to be happening in the second picture?

### While Reading

- 2 Read or listen to the episode and match the quotes to the characters. Some of the characters may not be used.

- 1 ☐ "Ah, my good lord, what I have seen tonight!"
- 2 ☐ "God be with you, sir."
- 3 ☐ "How everything urges me to take revenge!"
- 4 ☐ "The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body."
- 5 ☐ "Follow him at once."
- 6 ☐ "To be honest, we are fighting for a little piece of land."
- 7 ☐ "If I had hidden there instead of him, I would be dead now!"

- |            |           |            |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| a Claudius | c captain | e Polonius |
| b Gertrude | d Hamlet  | f ghost    |

### After Reading

- 3 Answer the questions.

- 1 Why do you think Claudius wants to have Hamlet killed away from Denmark?
- 2 Why doesn't Hamlet say goodbye to Claudius?
- 3 Hamlet's encounter with Fortinbras' army is another occasion that shows his lack of will to action. Explain why.

### Think!

Claudius says Hamlet is like a fever in his blood. What does he mean by this?



## Episode 9

### Before Reading

- 1 Look at the two pictures. What do they tell us about the outcome of the episode?

### While Reading

- 2 Read or listen to the episode and say who the words in bold in the following sentences refer to.

- 1 **She** is in a state of deep sorrow.
- 2 **She** will talk to **her**.
- 3 **Their** father's death made **her** mad.
- 4 **They** brought **him** a letter from Hamlet.
- 5 **He** went to meet Hamlet.
- 6 **He** cannot fight **their** great love for **him**.
- 7 **He** will help **him** get revenge.
- 8 **They** will fight a duel.
- 9 **She** drowned.
- 10 **He** will poison **his** drink.

### After Reading

- 3 Discuss in pairs:

- 1 Why does Laertes return to Denmark?
- 2 Why do you think Ophelia becomes mad?
- 3 Claudius' behaviour in this episode proves him to be most evil and calculating. Can you explain why by referring to the text?
- 4 What do you think is going to happen in the next episode?

### Think!

Based on the story so far, do you think Ophelia's death was an accident or suicide? Explain.

## Episode 10

### Before Reading

- 1 Look at the pictures and answer the questions.

- 1 What is going on in the first picture?
- 2 How do you think Hamlet feels in the second picture?

### While Reading

- 2 Answer the following questions.

- 1 How do Hamlet and Horatio come across the gravediggers?
- 2 Why do the gravediggers believe that if the dead person hadn't been someone important, she wouldn't have a proper burial?
- 3 Whose skull do they find while digging?
- 4 How does Hamlet react when he sees the skull? Why?
- 5 Why do the King, Queen and courtiers come to the graveyard?
- 6 Why is Laertes angry with the priest?

### After Reading

- 3 Discuss in pairs:

- 1 Why does Hamlet think the gravedigger uses words cleverly?
- 2 Laertes says, "from her pure flesh may violets spring." What does he mean by this?
- 3 What is Hamlet's attitude towards the dead?

### Think!

Why does Hamlet feel the need to hide when he sees the funeral procession approaching?



Characters: Hamlet  
 Claudius  
 Gertrude  
 Horatio  
 Polonius  
 Ghost  
 Rosencrantz  
 Guildenstern  
 Laertes  
 Ophelia  
 Guard  
 Ambassador 1  
 Ambassador 2

Actor 1  
 Actor 2  
 Captain  
 Soldiers  
 Messenger  
 Servant  
 Sailor 1  
 Sailor 2  
 Gravedigger 1  
 Gravedigger 2  
 Priest  
 Fortinbras

Narrator(s): At least one student dressed in black T-shirt and black leggings

## Scene 1

### *SONG: Winter in Denmark*

The young Prince of Denmark  
 Is lonely and sad  
 His life seems so empty  
 His luck seems so bad  
 His father has gone  
 And his uncle is mean  
 He feels more unhappy  
 Than he's ever been

*CHORUS: It's winter in Denmark  
 There's snow everywhere  
 There's ice on the ground  
 And revenge in the air*

The new King of Denmark  
 Is not a good man  
 He's greedy for power  
 He takes what he can  
 The crown is now his  
 And he's married the Queen  
 He feels he is greater  
 Than he's ever been

*REPEAT CHORUS*



**Narrator:**

King Hamlet of Denmark is dead. His brother, Claudius, has become the new King. King Hamlet's wife, Gertrude, has married Claudius just two months after the King's funeral.

**Claudius:**

My beloved brother is dead, and I am your new King. We all loved him dearly, but we must not be sad anymore. By marrying our beautiful Queen I have balanced sorrow with joy.







**All:** To the King and Queen!

**Claudius:** Also, let us not forget about the future of Denmark. Fortinbras, the Prince of Norway, is planning to attack our country. We must protect Denmark from his army. I have already asked his uncle, the present King of Norway, to stop Fortinbras.

**All:** To Denmark!

**Polonius:** Please, my lord. My son, Laertes, wants to speak to you.

**Claudius:** What is it, Laertes?

**Laertes:** My lord, I returned to Denmark to attend your coronation, but now I wish to return to France.

**Claudius:** What does your father say?

**Polonius:** My lord, he has my permission.

**Claudius:** Dear Laertes, to me you are as worthy as your father, good Polonius. Therefore, you may return to France.

**Laertes:** Thank you, my lord.

**Claudius:** But what are we going to do with Prince Hamlet? Why are you still mourning, my son?

**Hamlet:** I am not your son. My father is dead.

**Gertrude:** Come, Hamlet. Everyone dies one day. You cannot seem sad forever.

**Hamlet:** I do not seem sad, Mother. I am sad.

**Claudius:** Please, stop mourning, Hamlet. You have a new father now. Stay with us and do not go back to your studies in Wittenberg.

**Hamlet:** I wish to go back there. I was enjoying my studies.

**Claudius:** I don't think that is a good idea. You should stay here and do your duty as the Prince of Denmark.

**Gertrude:** Oh, please stay in Denmark, Hamlet.

**Hamlet:** Very well, Mother, if you wish it.

**Claudius:** That is wonderful news! Come, my dear. Let us go and celebrate.

**Hamlet:** I wish I could die! My life is so meaningless. My father was such a good king and loved my mother deeply. And she, after two months, married my uncle! My good friend, Horatio!

**Horatio:** My lord. I bring some news for you. I think I saw your father's ghost last night, outside the castle.

**Hamlet:** My father's ghost?



# Hamlet

Prince Hamlet's father is dead, and, to make matters worse, his Uncle Claudius has taken the throne and married his recently widowed mother. His father's ghost reveals that his death was not an accident and demands that the young prince takes revenge on those responsible. What will Hamlet do, and how will this affect the lives of those around him, especially his beloved Ophelia?



Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5 Level 6

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