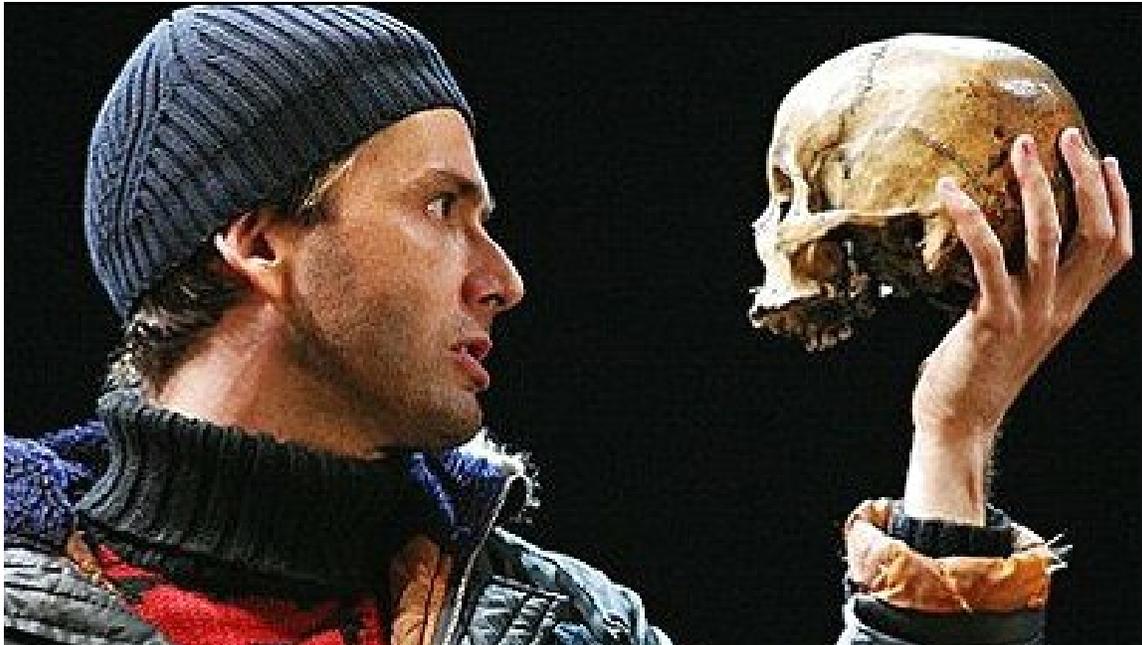




Rome Shakespeare Festival
Makervillage / River Arts District
252 North 5th Avenue
Rome, Georgia 30165



REVENGE FATE MORTALITY
JUSTICE MADNESS
HAMLET
GERTRUDE RELIGION OPHELIA
VIRTUE CHILDREN POLONIUS
PARENTS DISEASE CLAUDIUS
GHOST

STUDY GUIDE & CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

The educational mission of Rome Shakespeare Festival, is to enrich, engage and educate through excellence of Shakespeare and theatrical performance, empower learning using dramatic educational experiences that serve the public good.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare was born in April of 1564 and died in April of 1616. He grew up in Stratford-upon-Avon. There is not much known about his life, outside of his plays. The question of his education remains unanswered. There are documentations that lead scholars to believe that he may have attended The King's New School in Stratford-upon-Avon. This school was considered to be the one of the most excellent grammar schools in that area during that time. Shakespeare's Latin texts in his poems and his writings resemble the texts that schoolboys from that school were forced to memorize. Another indication of his schooling comes from knowledge of his father's position as an Alderman and Bailiff in Stratford, which would suggest that young William had a "top-notch" education. More commonly known is his marriage at 18 to Anne Hathaway and the birth of his three children. Unfortunately, one of his sons, Hamnet (a twin to his younger daughter, Judith) died in boyhood.

Eventually, Shakespeare left Stratford for London, and began his career as a poet, playwright, and actor. He is the author of 154 Sonnets. These "Shakespearean Sonnets" consist of three quatrains and a rhyming couplet. Common themes in these Sonnets are love, time, and beauty. He also wrote more than thirty plays divided as Comedies, Histories and Tragedies in the Folio published after his death.



William Shakespeare



HAMLET CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

It is important to give students information about the play and for them to have an idea about the plot of the play, before having them delve in.

Themes, and ideals are equally important to know beforehand. It helps to relieve the anxiety of working through such a play, it also allows some connectivity to occur organically.

Why is this play so demanding and yet so timely? It appears to be just a story of Prince Hamlet who lives in a castle and is called home from school after the death of his father, King Hamlet. The new king is young Hamlet's Uncle, King Claudius who has further rocked the boat by marrying Prince Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. Already we have a story of a strange family dynamic in which a man has killed his brother and has taken over his kingdom and his wife! Hamlet is then visited by his father, in ghostly form, and is commanded to get revenge for his untimely murder. While Hamlet struggles with this plea for revenge, a series of events follow and ultimately lead to the death of two entire families, one of which is Hamlet's:

Betrayal, revenge, murder, depression, uncertainty, family, religion, love, secrets, emotional imbalances-everything a teenager, and/or an adult, has to endure is in Hamlet.

Hamlet is a tragedy, a type of drama that presents a heroic or noble character with conflicts that are difficult or impossible to resolve. comments that in a tragedy the characters involve themselves inextricably in that web of circumstances that will constitute their doom. Things change in tragedy, usually for the worse, and there is a sense that no one can resist the tragic momentum.

The "tragic momentum" is what makes this play so unforgettable and so relatable. Hamlet is filled with a series of unfortunate events that leads to class discussions of themes and characters and their evolution towards self-destruction. It is the type of play that lends itself to self-reflection and to infinite complications of our understanding of why people take action and don't take action. This too is relatable.

- The neighbor lets his dog wander in my yard. Should I take action? Hard to say, there are pros and cons.
- A drug lord has killed my father (not everybody knows it but I have it on reliable authority) and is dating my mother. What should I do? Even now there are pros and cons.



THEMES

It is important to address this play in terms of understanding; that is to say, the level of understanding students will have.

DEATH

There are several scenes in which death is not metaphoric, but rather, literal. Soon enough we learn that King Hamlet is dead by way of poisoning from his own brother.

In Act 3 scene 4, Polonius is hiding behind a curtain and murdered by Prince Hamlet.

In Act 4 scene 7, we hear from Gertrude of Ophelia's drowning, after Hamlet has dumped her and her father dies.

In Act 5 scene 2, Queen Gertrude, Laertes, King Claudius, and Prince Hamlet are all poisoned wither by cup or sword and all die.

There are also scenes in which death is pondered upon.

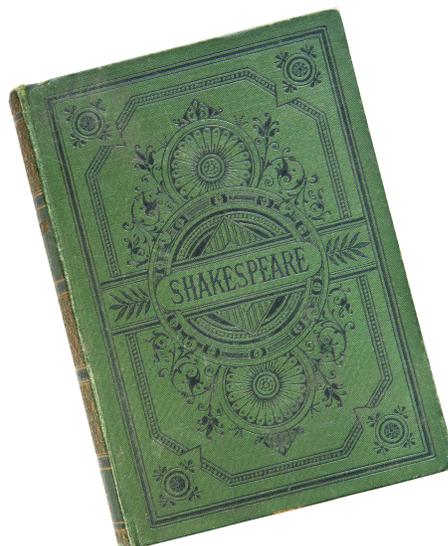
In Act 1 scene 2, King Claudius reprimands Hamlet for mourning his father's death:

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet, to give these mourning duties to your father. But you must know your father lost a father...But to persevere in obstinate condolment is a course of impious stubbornness. 'Tis unmanly grief. It shows a will most incorrect to heaven, a heart unfortified, a mind impatient an understanding simple and unschooled.

In that same scene, young Hamlet replies in one line that he will do as told. Then, he speaks with no one present:

"O, that this too too solid flesh would melt / Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!"

Here we see Hamlet's first feelings about death and how he wishes to deal with the death of his father.



Act 3 scene 1, Hamlet gives us his most famous soliloquy contemplating the idea of living or dying and ultimately choosing life for the fear of hell: “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? To die, to sleep— No more...”

Act 3 scene 4: Polonius is hiding behind a curtain and murdered by Prince Hamlet.

Act 4 scene 7: We hear from Gertrude of Ophelia’s drowning, after Hamlet has dumped her and her father dies.

Act 5 scene 2: Queen Gertrude, Laertes, King Claudius, and Prince Hamlet are all poisoned by cup or sword and all die.

LOYALTY

“Give me that man / That is not passion’s slave, and I will wear him / In my heart’s core, ay, in my heart of heart,/ As I do thee.” —Hamlet (3.2) This theme encompasses not only characters’ loyalty to the nation of Denmark (or lack thereof), but loyalty to each other as friends, romantic partners, or family (which is discussed later). Polonius, the lord chamberlain, is fiercely loyal to the new King Claudius, even at the expense of his daughter, Ophelia, when Claudius and Gertrude attempt to uncover the cause of Hamlet’s strange behavior; Polonius suggests he and Claudius eavesdrop on Hamlet and Ophelia’s conversation (he employs this tactic later in Hamlet’s confrontation with Gertrude, but is killed). Horatio, Hamlet’s closest friend, swears to conceal their encounter with the Ghost so Hamlet can confirm the Ghost’s claims of Claudius’ murderous actions. Horatio clings tightly to Hamlet’s side through the whole play and offers sound advice, even if Hamlet doesn’t always heed it.

MORALITY

“O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven...” —Claudius (3.3) Is it the moral to kill someone because they killed someone else? That is one of many questions weighing heavily on Hamlet’s mind over the course of the play. This moral quandary is central to the story. Even as Hamlet sees Claudius praying in remorse for his crimes, the prince does not act, waiting instead until his uncle is in the midst of an immoral act to slay him. Not until the last third of the play does Hamlet finally take action, only to accidentally kill Polonius, thinking it was Claudius.

FAMILY

“If thou didst ever thy dear father love— / Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.” —Ghost (1.5) Familial relationships could be considered the most prominent theme in Hamlet. Most of the principal characters are either in Denmark’s royal family (Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude) or Polonius’ family (siblings Laertes and Ophelia), and as discussed in the above paragraph, the loyalties of many of these characters hinge on their familial relationships. For example, both Hamlet and Laertes are looking to avenge their respective fathers’ deaths. By contrast, Polonius chooses loyalty to the king over his own family by commanding Ophelia to end her relationship with Hamlet, and Claudius’ motivations for murdering his own brother are unclear but no less tragic.

THE SUPERNATURAL

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” —Hamlet (1.5) The appearance of the Ghost in the first scene is the catalyst for the rest of the story unfolding. However, when the Ghost reveals to Hamlet the circumstances of “his foul and most unnatural murder” (1.5), Hamlet spends much of the rest of the play unsure whether the Ghost was actually his father’s spirit or the devil, who “hath power to assume a pleasing shape” (2.2). When Hamlet confirms Claudius’ guilt, but has accidentally killed

Polonius and is berating his mother, the Ghost again appears, but this time to reassure and comfort his son. Unfortunately, only Hamlet can see the Ghost, and Gertrude believes her son to be mad. The characters are also faithful believers in the afterlife, and in the full text, we see many references to being prepared for death, such as the forgiveness of sins, last rites, etc.; because the Ghost was murdered and received none of those rites, he remains to walk the earth as a spirit until his murder is avenged. Additionally, Polonius also receives a quick funeral, Hamlet refrains from killing Claudius while he prays, and the Ghost begs Hamlet to step between his mother and “her fighting soul” (3.4).

REVENGE

Just as death is an ever present and ever rampant theme in the text, so equally is the concept of revenge. The action of the play is pointed toward revenge by the ghost of King Hamlet and thus is the impetus for the actions that follow. Every act of the play brings up the theme of revenge; whether through the action of vengeance, the contemplation of it, or admiration for an avenger. Below is a list of Acts and scenes that deal with this theme and a brief synopsis of the thoughts or actions within. This information was found in varying study guides for students including Sparknotes.com and Cliffnotes.com:

Act 1 Scene 5: Hamlet promises his father to avenge his murder but laments the responsibility he now bears.

Act 2 Scene 2: Hamlet berates his own passivity and contrasts it with the passion of the first actor for long-dead, legendary figures.

Act 3 Scene 3: Coming upon Claudius confessing the murder while trying to pray, Hamlet thinks the better of killing the king when he is penitent.

Act 3 Scene 4: The ghost visits Hamlet while he is with his mother and reminds Hamlet he has not yet avenged his murder.

Act 4 Scene 4: After his encounter with Fortinbras, Hamlet marvels that people kill one another over so slight a gain as 'a little patch of land' and resolves that from now on all his thoughts will be 'bloody.'

Act 4 Scene 5: In contrast with Hamlet's reflectiveness, Laertes determines on revenge without hesitation.

Act 5 Scene 2: Claudius's plot results in the death of most of the major characters. Before he dies, Hamlet kills Claudius.

There are several important factors to note here. One is that Hamlet is foiled by Laertes and Fortinbras. Laertes has found out about the murder of his father and the death of his sister and does not hesitate to avenge his father. Hamlet spends the majority of the play contemplating and vacillating between his methods or time of revenge. Here is a prince with a murdered father and a murderous Uncle, with much less heart than Laertes, the son of Polonius, a councilor to the current king. It is not a question for him or a matter of morals and ethics-or even fear. It is a matter of honor and respect for his family. In the situation involving Fortinbras, Hamlet is in awe of his haste to action. Fortinbras did not have his father murdered, but shows valor and courage in getting what his family wants: land. Fortinbras employs thousands of men to the “valley of death” for property and has no fear of death or his possible elimination.

LITERARY DEVICES IN HAMLET

SIMILE: a comparison of two different things that often uses “like,” “than,” or “as.” “Whiles, like a puff ’d and reckless libertine, / Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads...” – Ophelia; 1.3

METAPHOR: a “condensed” comparison that expresses a complex idea in a precise way. “Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune...” – Hamlet; 3.1

ANTITHESIS: setting one idea against another. “To be, or not to be, that is the question...” - Hamlet; 3.1

DRAMATIC IRONY: a kind of irony that occurs when the meaning of the situation is understood by the audience but not by the characters in the play. “I am justly kill’d with mine own treachery.” – Laertes; 5.2

FORESHADOWING: an indication of what is to come. “What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord... / And draw you into madness?” – Horatio; 1.4

ALLITERATION: Repeated consonant sounds. “Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue” – Hamlet; 3.2

PERSONIFICATION: Giving human characteristics to an abstract idea or something which is not human. “None, my lord, but that the world’s grown honest.” – Rosencrantz; 2.2

IMAGERY: Describing offstage action, encouraging audiences to use their imagination. “There with fantastic garlands did she come / Of crownflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples / That liberal shepherds give a grosser name, / But our cold maids do dead men’s fingers call them:” – Gertrude; 4.6

SOLILOQUY

A speech delivered to the audience instead of other characters, usually alone on stage, in which the speaker explores their thoughts and feelings. In this activity, students will explore the most famous of Hamlet’s soliloquies from both a scholarly and theatrical perspective.

Act 3 scene 1: Hamlet gives us his most famous soliloquy contemplating the idea of living or dying and ultimately choosing life for the fear of hell:

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?

To die, to sleep— No more...and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to; ’tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish’d. To die, to sleep— To sleep, perchance to
dream—ay, there’s the rub, For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause; there’s the respect
That makes calamity of so long life: For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th’ oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely, The pangs of despis’d love,
the law’s delay, The insolence of office, and the spurns That patient merit of th’ unworthy

takes, When he himself might his quietus make With a bare bodkin; who would fardels bear, To grunt and sweat under a weary life, But that the dread of something after death, The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn No traveller returns, puzzles the will, And makes us rather bear those ills we have, Than fly to others that we know not of? Thus conscience does make cowards of us all, And thus the native hue of resolution Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, And enterprises of great pitch and moment With this regard their currents turn awry, And lose the name of action.—Soft you now, The fair Ophelia. Nymph, in thy orisons Be all my sins rememb'ed.

ACTIVITY:

INDEPENDENTLY, HAVE STUDENTS: • Read the speech aloud. • Circle any words or lines they don't understand. • Examine the action of the play leading up to this speech.

Working in small groups of 3-4, have students identify and discuss any words and lines that have been circled. Have each group member take turns reading the speech to their peers:

First Person—take a slight pause each time they reach punctuation marks.

Second Person—pace back and forth throughout the whole speech.

Third Person—stay completely still.

Fourth Person—shout one line of the speech while doing the rest in a whisper.

Discuss how these different vocal & physical choices affect the speech's meaning & rhythm.

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

- In a couple sentences, describe what is happening in the speech.
- What is Hamlet trying to work out in the speech? What does he decide? What discoveries does he make, if any?

QUESTIONS:

- Have you ever had a really hard time making an important decision? If yes, how did you finally decide what to do?
- In the past, what has stopped you from acting on correct (or incorrect) decisions immediately?
- Someone you trust tells you something bad about someone else you trust. How do you know whom to believe?
- Have you ever pretended to be something you're not? If so, why?
- Is revenge ever justified?

There are other soliloquies that we will read closely and analyze for character development or theme. Below is a list of soliloquies and the Acts and scenes they can be found in:

Laertes to Ophelia 1.3

Hamlet's feelings about his father's death and mother's marriage 1.2

Hamlet meets the ghost 1.5

Hamlet action vs. inaction 2.2

“To be or not to be...” 3.1

Claudius’ prayer 3.3

Hamlet stalls again 3.3

Hamlet’s final soliloquy 4.4

Close reading gives the students a chance to focus on specific parts of the text. Questions for students to answer while they read; characteristics to identify in each soliloquy; character development through words given by the character; or even questions concerning figurative language, denotative and connotative language, etc. A close reading is a way to analyze a passage for a more in depth interpretation and analysis.

UNDERSTANDING HAMLET

The first 5 lines in Act I begin with the very important question, “Who’s there?”

Act I. Scene i: Elsinore. A platform before the castle.

FRANCISCO at his post. Enter to him BERNARDO

BERNARDO :Who's there?

FRANCISCO :Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.

BERNARDO :Long live the king!

FRANCISCO :Bernardo?

BERNARDO

Do a close reading of these lines, including the information given. These lines are easy enough for students to understand, but it’s the greater theme of “Who” that encompasses the play and the end goal for this unit. This opening gives us a setting, a part of the plot, a prevalent tone, and will introduce students to the reason for this entire play. We now know that there are guards necessary for a watch at the castle. We know that it is dark and might be scary (Who’s there?). Pay particular interest to the “stand and unfold yourself” line, as it has a connection to students and the unmasking that they must do in order to identify their true selves.

QUESTIONS?

In the text of Hamlet, you will find 421 question marks. The play begins with Bernardo asking, “Who’s there?” and the word ‘question’ appears fifteen times in the script. Whenever a play asks as many questions as Hamlet does, we can be sure that audiences, readers, actors, directors, and scholars will expend considerable effort to find answers.

As educators, we often have the tendency to answer these questions for our students by explaining and interpreting the text. We tell them what the play “is supposed to mean.”

Why not provide students with an opportunity to discover their own answers to the questions asked in Hamlet. By finding ways for students to make personal connections with Hamlet, we stop being translators, and students take over the role of teaching themselves.

ACTIVITY #1:

- Unroll a big piece of tape (duct tape works well) across the floor, so you divide the room into two equal sides. Move all desks to the edges of the room.
- Tell the class that today you're going to play a "game" called "Cross That Line." You will read a statement and students need to choose to stand on one side of the line depending on whether they agree or disagree with the statement. After each statement, ask two or three students on each side why they have chosen to stand where they are. You may choose to let students stand on the line if they are undecided.
- Use the following statements to ask students in the course of the game. Have those who agree with the statement stand on one side of the line, and those that disagree on the other.

Statements to be discussed:

- a. IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARENTS
 - b. BREAKING UP WITH A BOYFRIEND OR GIRLFRIEND IS DIFFICULT.
 - c. ADULTERY IS ALWAYS WRONG.
 - d. GHOSTS ARE REAL. V. REVENGE IS APPROPRIATE.
 - e. MURDER IS ALWAYS WRONG.
 - f. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS A "PERFECT" FAMILY.
 - g. THERE IS NO WAY TO KNOW IF A PERSON IS TRULY "CRAZY."
- After sharing opinions on these statements. Tell students that all of these issues are in the play Hamlet. Tell students you will play the game again once they've finished reading the play, to see if their opinions have changed.
 - Were students able to express opinions without attacking others' views? Did standing on the line allow the activity to stay "safe" for students who did not want to take a stand? Did the activity generate interesting discussion? Did it help introduce the issues in Hamlet?

ACTIVITY #2:

1. Divide students into pairs.
2. Have the students select a situation in which parents might give children advice: leaving home for school, camp, or marriage are good choices because they have parallels to Polonius's advice.
3. Give the students ten minutes to write down as much advice as possible for a student in that situation.
4. For each pair of students, select a student to be the recipient of the advice. Seat that student in front of the classroom and have the "parents" bombard the student with their prepared advice.
5. Solicit student reaction: what did it feel like to be the brunt of unsolicited advice? Did they find themselves talking like their parents?

6. Pass out a copy of the handout (attached), Polonius's advice to Laertes from 1.3. For homework, ask students to evaluate each individual piece of his advice as good or bad.
7. The following day, conduct a discussion in which you compare the advice the students developed with Polonius's speech. Which rankles more, Polonius's advice or modern parents'?
8. Direct students to Laertes's advice to Ophelia, 1.3.13-48, and to Polonius's advice to Ophelia, 1.3.98-144. Have students compare and contrast the different sets of advice, either in discussion or as a writing assignment.
9. Have students consider Polonius's advice in light of his actions in 2.1.1-83. How far does he follow his own advice? Again, have students analyze in discussion or in writing.

PRINCE HAMLET

Thus we witness a main character who is disturbed and disgusted with his family. Hamlet is also described by critics as depressed, uncertain, emotionally imbalanced, and-- like his uncle--a murderer. This, then, is Lord Hamlet at the opening of the play, depressed and embittered, with his self-esteem and emotional balance shaken by his mother's hasty marriage to his uncle. Before the day is over, two events will occur that will greatly exacerbate his precarious state.

Shortly after, Hamlet is visited by his deceased father and informed of his father's murder and murderer. The ghost, King Hamlet, prods Hamlet to avenge his death. Hamlet contemplates this revenge and tells his friends in Act 1 scene 5, that in view of what he has learned (he says nothing yet about avenging a murder), he will put on an "antic disposition". This line causes many to question whether Hamlet's madness is feigned or genuine. The answer to this question is given when we see, in Act 3, Hamlet confronting his mother, Gertrude, about the murder of his father. When he hears a noise in his mother's bedroom, he thinks it is the king and proceeds to stab the curtain dweller, Polonius:

Queen: What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me? Help, help, ho!

Polonius[Behind]: What, ho! help, help, help!

Hamlet: [Drawing] How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead! [Makes a pass through the arras]

Polonius[Behind]: O, I am slain! [Falls and dies]

Queen: what hast thou done? 5

It would be easy to forgive Hamlet here; after all, he did not mean to kill Polonius. However, he did intend harm for his new stepfather, King Claudius In the final act of the play, Hamlet does kill the king by the sword and by poison and accidentally kills Polonius' son, Laertes, while dueling.

QUESTIONS:

- Name some traits that a great leader should have.
- How were the four themes discussed in this guide (loyalty, morality, family, and the supernatural) referenced in the performance?

- Who in this play thinks primarily and who are persons of action?
- Characterize yourself as a “thinker” or a “doer.” As such, which character in the play are you most like and why?
- What did you learn from watching the tragedy of Hamlet that you can apply to how you interact with your family or community?
- Describe a situation in which a politician or a world leader made a decision based on personal beliefs that had consequences for the entire country (ie, starting a war)

OTHER SOLILOQUIES

Laertes to Ophelia 1.3

Hamlet’s feelings about his father’s death and mother’s marriage 1.2

Hamlet meets the ghost 1.5

Hamlet action vs. inaction 2.2

“To be or not to be...” 3.1

Claudius’ prayer 3.3

Hamlet stalls again 3.3

Hamlet’s final soliloquy 4.4

TWO GREAT MODERN HAMLET PERFORMANCES

David Tennant in the 2008 RSC production of Hamlet

After the Doctor Who franchise with his winning smile and widened eyes, that jokes about sonic screwdrivers, David Tennant, presented a vigorous, mercurial and fiercely intelligent Hamlet; a jeans and T-shirt prince capable of making you laugh but waspish too in his wit; one of us, yet a rare, strange breed.

Jude Law at Wyndham's Theatre in 2009

Jude Law’s approach was to lend the character the air of a caged animal, full of mutinous energy, and letting that energy flow in a volatile fashion through the verse. This was no lofty detached Hamlet but one burning with injustice.

CREDITS: Chenise Gregory...To Thine Own Self be True: Uncovering the Hamlet in You, Yale National Initiative; Education Curriculum Guide...Shakespeare Festival of St Louis