



CURRICULUM GUIDE

FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

A companion to the Folger Shakespeare Library Edition

Folger SHAKESPEARE
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Advancing knowledge & the arts

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ON THE COVER:

John Austen. Title design, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Pen and ink drawing, ca. 1922. Folger Shakespeare Library.

See more *Hamlet* images from the Folger collection at www.folger.edu/digitalimagecollection.



Images: 1) William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. London, 1604. Folger Shakespeare Library. 2) Ethan Hawke in the title role, *Hamlet*, directed by Michael Almereyda, 2000. Photo: Larry Riley. Miramax. 3) John Gregory. *Hamlet* bas relief. Folger Shakespeare Library. 4) Film cover of *Laurence Olivier zeigt Hamlet*. Germany, 1948. Folger Shakespeare Library. 5) Cam Magee (Hamlet), Steve Carpenter (Hamlet), Kate Eastwood Norris (Hamlet); Kneeling: Holly Twyford (Hamlet), *Hamlet*, directed by Joe Banno, Folger Theatre, 1999. Photo by Ken Cobb. Folger Shakespeare Library.

At the Folger, we love to see students take Shakespeare and make it their own. We believe that Shakespeare is for everyone and that students of all ability levels can successfully engage with his works.



SHAKESPEARE IS FOR EVERYONE!



Shakespeare isn't an antiquated art form. His plays are full of explosive family situations, complex relationships, and deep emotions that today's students can—and do—relate to. At the Folger Shakespeare Library, we love to see students take Shakespeare and make it their own. We believe that Shakespeare is for everyone and that students of all ability levels can successfully engage with his works.



The best way to *learn* Shakespeare is to *do* Shakespeare. What does this mean? Put simply, it is getting students up on their feet and physically, intellectually, and vocally engaging with the text. We believe that students learn best using a performance-based methodology and that performance can build a personal connection with the text that traditional teaching methods may not.



Performance—which is not the same thing as “acting”—activates the imagination. Active learning invigorates the mind and stays with the learner. Shakespeare's genius with language, his skill as a dramatist, and his insight into the human condition can instill even the least academic student with a passion not only for Shakespeare but also for language, drama, psychology, and knowledge.

The Lesson Plans and Tips for Teaching Shakespeare included in this Curriculum Guide provide practical, classroom-tested approaches for using performance-based teaching techniques. We have also included a Synopsis, a *Hamlet* Fact Sheet, and Famous Lines and Phrases from the play and interesting facts to share with students.

Remember that enthusiasm is more important than expertise. There is always more for everyone to learn, so enjoy the ride with your students!

Photos from Folger student Shakespeare festivals, classroom visits, and teacher workshops by Mignonette Dooley, Mimi Marquet, Deidra Starnes, and Lloyd Wolf.

Robert Young
Director of Education
Folger Shakespeare Library



Steve Carpenter (Hamlet's Tongue), John Emmert (Ghost), Lucy Newman-Williams (Gertrude), Holly Twyford (Hamlet), *Hamlet*, directed by Joe Banno, Folger Theatre, 1999. Photo by Ken Cobb. Folger Shakespeare Library.

HAMLET

SYNOPSIS

A Ghost appears at Elsinore castle. Prince Hamlet goes to the castle ramparts to watch for the apparition. When the Ghost reappears, it speaks to Hamlet and claims to be his dead father. The Ghost asks Hamlet to avenge his murder. Hamlet, horrified, vows to “remember.” Uncertain of whom he can trust, Hamlet feigns madness. His mother Gertrude and his uncle Claudius, who is now king of Denmark and Hamlet’s stepfather, send two of Hamlet’s friends to spy on him and to discover the cause of his apparent madness. Hamlet arranges for a play about the murder of a king to be performed, hoping that it will reveal Claudius’ guilt. Convinced that Claudius is guilty, Hamlet finds him alone but is unable to go through with killing him. Claudius sends Hamlet to England, where he has given orders for Hamlet to be killed, but Hamlet escapes. Hamlet returns to Denmark to complete his vengeance, and succeeds in killing Claudius before he himself is killed.

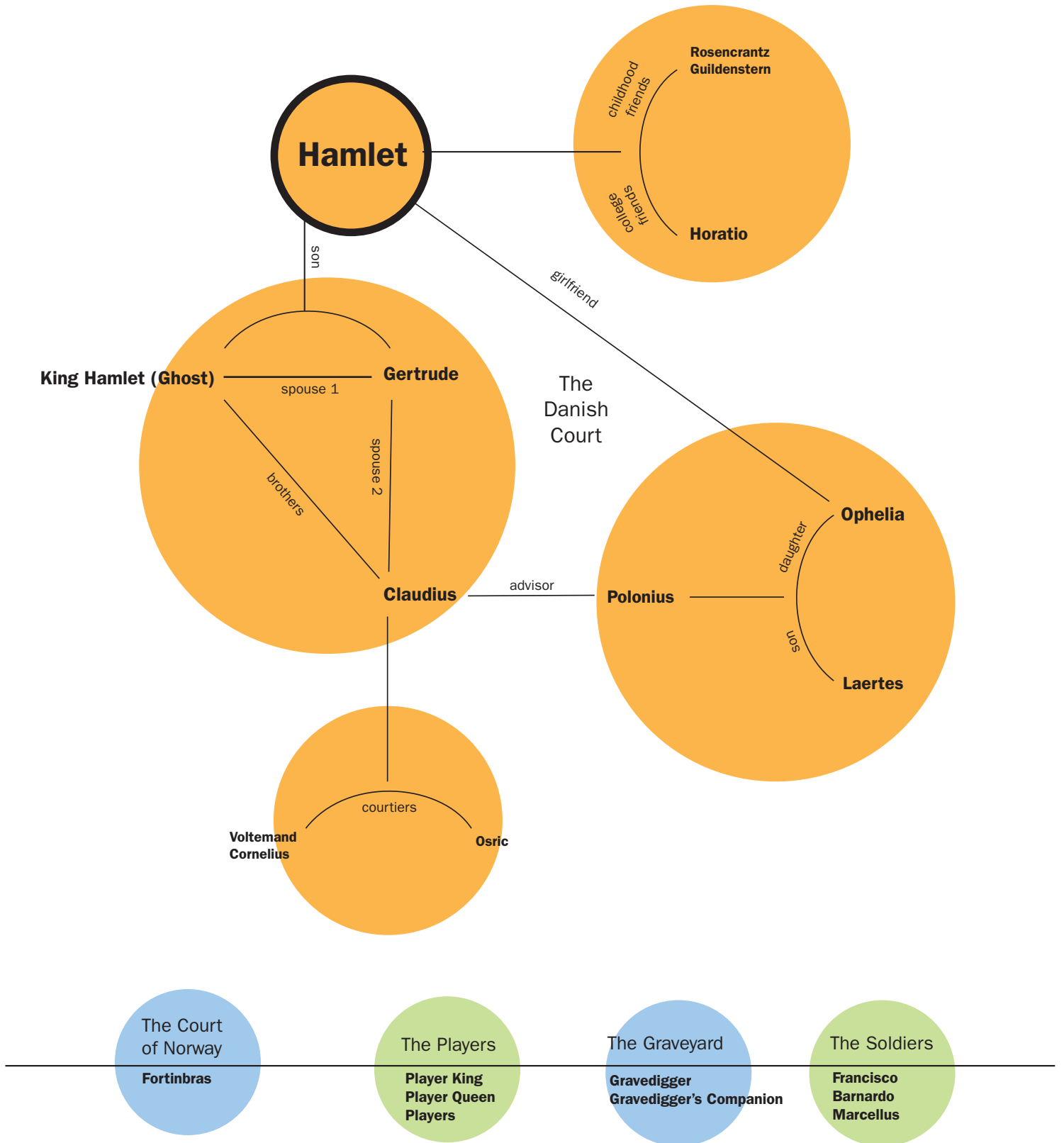
From the *Folger Shakespeare Library Edition* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992).

Learn more at www.folger.edu/editions.



See more *Hamlet* images from the Folger collection at www.folger.edu/digitalimagecollection.

HAMLET CHARACTER CONNECTIONS



FROM ONE CLASSROOM TEACHER TO ANOTHER

The single most efficient tool for unlocking Shakespeare's language is performance.

Dear Colleagues,

In the text of the Folger Edition of *Hamlet* you will find 421 question marks. The play begins with Barnardo 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 teachers, 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." **By finding ways for students to make personal connections with *Hamlet*, we stop being translators, and students take over the role of teacher themselves.**

The single most efficient tool for unlocking Shakespeare's language is performance. Students who would otherwise approach *Hamlet* with fear and boredom can be "hooked" into the play from the beginning if they are actively involved in decisions about the ways to approach and enact the text. Students needn't read every word of a play. They'll get it quite nicely anyway.

The one element you cannot eliminate is performance. Performance isn't putting on a fully rehearsed scene with costumes for an audience (although it can be)—instead, think of performance as vertical text analysis. **Students are actively engaging with the text: physically, intellectually, and vocally.**

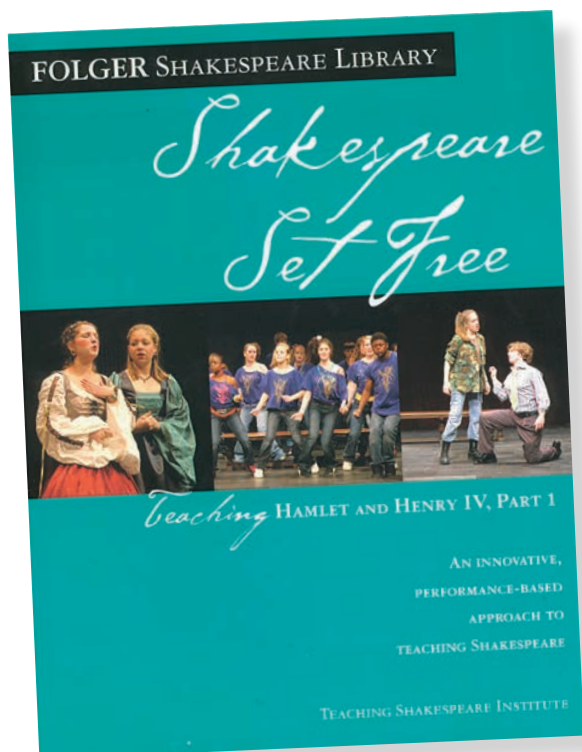
Be willing to take a risk. The approach we are advocating is indeed risky. As a teacher, you will no longer be in charge of what your students learn. You will find them arguing about words and lines, discussing interpretations of how to enact a scene. In short, they will have become active learners, not just people sitting at desks.

Pat Thisted

Editor, *Hamlet* unit, Shakespeare Set Free

Ellicott Junior-Senior High School, Ellicott, CO

Excerpted from *Shakespeare Set Free: Teaching Hamlet and Henry IV, Part 1* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992).



Learn more at www.folger.edu/shakespearestfree.



See performance-based teaching strategies in action at www.folger.edu/teachervideos.



TIPS FOR TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

Performing Shakespeare—even at the most rudimentary level, script in hand, stumbling over the difficult words—can and usually does permanently change a students’ relationship with the plays and their author.



At the Folger, we believe that **Shakespeare is for everyone.** We believe that students of all ability levels, all backgrounds, and at all grade levels can—and do—successfully engage with Shakespeare’s works.

Why? Because Shakespeare, done right, inspires. The plays are full of explosive family situations and complex relationships that adolescents recognize.


Performance is particularly crucial in teaching Shakespeare, whose naked language on the page may be difficult to understand. “Performance” in this sense does not mean presenting memorized, costumed, fully staged shows, although those can be both satisfying and educational. Performance means getting students up on their feet, moving around a classroom as characters, and speaking the lines themselves.

Remember:

1. Enthusiasm is more important than expertise—there is always more for everyone to learn, so enjoy the ride with your students!
2. Trust Shakespeare’s original language, but don’t labor over every word.
3. Pick out key scenes that speak most clearly to your students. You do not have to start with Act 1, Scene 1.
4. Use the text to explain the life and times, not vice versa.

The following two Lesson Plans will give you practical ways to get started using this approach in your classroom.

Want More?

Folger Education’s *Shakespeare Set Free Toolkit* is a comprehensive resource for teaching Shakespeare, with lesson plans, activity guides, podcasts, videos, and other teaching tools. Learn more at www.folger.edu/toolkit. 

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE FAQS

How long does it take to teach a play?

A Shakespeare unit can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, depending on your students. You may want to spend a few days to introduce the play's major characters and themes, or you could spend a couple of weeks exploring several scenes, key ideas, and multiple interpretations. Full play units, such as the ones in *Shakespeare Set Free*, can take up to six weeks to teach. You do **NOT** need to start with Act 1, Scene 1 and you do **NOT** need to labor over every word.

Do I need to teach the entire play?

Sometimes it is better to do just part of a play rather than the whole play. Or you might opt for a Shakespeare sampler, using several scenes from different plays.

Which edition of the play is best to use with students?

The Folger Shakespeare Library paperback editions are relatively inexpensive, and easy to use, with the text on one page and footnotes and scene summaries on the facing page. Be aware that Shakespeare plays in literature anthologies often edit out some of the more bawdy content—content which students often love. They are also very heavy to carry around when students are performing scenes.

You can install the **Free Electronic Shakespeare Reader** on your hard drive on any Windows computer at www.shakespeare.ariyam.com. This is a downloadable piece of software that allows you to have all of Shakespeare's 38 plays instantly at your fingertips. Once you have it, there is no Internet connection required. It also provides in-depth full-text searching to all of Shakespeare's plays. You can also download the text online from sites such as www.opensourceshakespeare.org.

Should I start with the movie?

One disadvantage with watching a film version first is that students equate this version with the play and have difficulty realizing that scenes and

lines can be interpreted and enacted in many different ways. One way around this is to start with one scene which your students read and perform. Follow this activity by showing clips from several film versions of the same scene. This strategy enables allow for some meaningful discussion about possible interpretations.

What if I have never read the play before?

Learn along with your students—model for them the enthusiasm and excitement that comes with authentic learning.

Do I need to teach about the Globe Theatre or Shakespeare's Life?

The simple answer is "No." While telling students that Shakespeare had three children and that he and Anne Hathaway had to get married might be interesting, it really doesn't help them understand the plays. It's much better to integrate some facts about Elizabethan life when they come up in the plays. So when Francis Flute protests, "Let me not play a woman. I have a beard coming" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, that's the perfect opportunity to explain the Elizabethan stage convention of young men playing the female parts.

Are student projects helpful?

Designing Globe Theatres out of sugar cubes and Popsicle sticks, designing costumes, creating Elizabethan newspapers in the computer lab, doing a scavenger hunt on the Internet, or doing a report on Elizabethan sanitary conditions has nothing to do with a student's appreciation of Shakespeare's language. If you want to give students a project, have them select, rehearse, and perform a scene.

What is a "trigger scene?"

A trigger scene is a short scene from a play that introduces the students to key characters and plot elements. Most important, the trigger scene shows students that they can uncover the meaning of Shakespeare's texts as they "put the scene on its feet."

Tried and true trigger scenes for beginning Shakespeare:

Hamlet, 1.1

(Ghost appears to soldiers)

Julius Caesar, 3.3

(Cinna the poet is attacked by mob)

Macbeth, 1.3.38 onwards

(Macbeth meets the witches)

A Midsummer Night's Dream, 1.2

(The rustic actors are introduced)

Much Ado About Nothing, 4.1

(Beatrice urges Benedick to kill Claudio)

Othello, 1.1

(Iago rudely awakens Brabantio)

Romeo and Juliet, 3.5

(Juliet angers her parents)

The Taming of the Shrew, 2.1

(The two sisters quarrel)

Twelfth Night, 2.2

(Malvolio returns ring to "Cesario")

Want More?

Folger Education's *Shakespeare Set Free* Toolkit is a comprehensive resource for teaching Shakespeare, with lesson plans, activity guides, podcasts, videos, and other teaching tools. Learn more at www.folger.edu/toolkit.



HAMLET LESSON PLAN

You Can't Go Home Again (or, If It's Not One Thing, It's Your Mother)

Jenny Beekley,
Danvers High School, Danvers, MA

Scenes Covered

Hamlet, 1.2.1–164
Folger Shakespeare Library Edition

Meeting the Standards

This lesson plan covers NCTE Standards 1, 3, 4, 8, and 11.

What's On for Today and Why

Students will confront the central problem of this play: Hamlet's dilemmas. Focusing on Hamlet's reactions to the death of his father and the remarriage of his mother, students will study the text and grasp its subtleties by assuming the roles of directors and actors. Students will perform the scene for the class in groups and discuss the editorial and directorial choices each group made. Students will then watch a film clip of this scene and discuss the choices that the director and actors in the film made. Finally, they will write about this series of activities in a journal entry.

The goal of this lesson is for students to explore the dynamics that exist between the characters, and how those dynamics create dramatic tension. It will also encourage students to consider Hamlet's first soliloquy through the eyes of a director and performer.

This lesson plan will take two days.

What To Do

1. Students will have read 1.2 before coming to class. Begin with a quick clarification session on what, if anything, students didn't "get" in the reading.
2. Give students photocopies of 1.2.1–164 (see handout). Divide students into groups of 5 or 6 students each. Instruct the groups to assign parts and read through the scene together. Encourage students to add notes

in the margins, making collective decisions as to when characters should enter and exit, where they should stand, what emotions they should convey, etc. Students should feel free to cut long sections of text, as long as the "essence" of the scene remains. As a guideline, students should be working with an edited script that takes 5–6 minutes to perform.

3. After 15 minutes, students should be on their feet, scripts in hand, working through the scene and their new stage directions. Remind students that this scene will be performed the next day. To guide students while they are working, distribute a list of important reminders (see handout).

4. When students enter class the second day, have them get in their groups and do a 5 minute run-through of their scene. Remind students to follow the guidelines on their handout. Students should arrange their seats so that the classroom has an open area to act in. Encourage students to watch the other groups closely, noting the decisions each group made. The audience should consider: body language, tone of voice, position of characters in relation to each other, and the overall mood of the scene.

5. After the last group finishes, ask students to respond to the performances. Ask students to highlight the similarities and differences between the scenes. Particularly, how did each group choose to portray Hamlet as he responded to his mother? Was he insolent, despairing, or angry? How did Claudius act? What did each group cut from the scene? What did each group leave in? Let the discussion run its course, but leave at least 10 minutes at the end to view the scene on film.

6. Show the class one director's idea of how to do this scene (I recommend the Branagh or Zeffirelli versions). Tell students that they will be responding to this section of the film in a writing assignment for homework: a journal entry that discusses the directorial decisions of the films, and the effectiveness of the actors' portrayals.

What You Need

- Photocopies of 1.2.1–164 (pages 21–31 of the *Folger Shakespeare Library Edition*) for each student
- Reminders handout
- A TV and VCR or DVD player
- *Hamlet* film (Almeryda, 2000; Branagh, 1996; or Zeffirelli, 1991)

How Did It Go?

Were students talking in their groups about the "vital" parts of the scene? Did each student thoughtfully present his/her character to the audience and to the other characters? Were students aware of the different choices each group made? Was the effect of those choices apparent to students? In their writing, did students think about the characters' motivations and how these motivations are conveyed? Are the students developing a sense of what the problems in this play are?

Want more?



Find more ideas and resources on teaching *Hamlet* at www.folger.edu/teachinghamlet.

HAMLET LESSON PLAN | REMINDERS

You Can't Go Home Again (or, If It's Not One Thing, It's Your Mother)

WHAT YOU NEED TO CONSIDER AND ADDRESS IN YOUR PERFORMANCE:

1. What are the major plot developments in this scene? Are they represented in your performance?
2. What feelings are expressed by the characters? How will you convey these feelings through tone, facial expression, and body movements?
3. How do the characters interact with each other? Choose body language and positioning that reflects how the characters feel about each other in this scene.
4. Remember, your scene can only be 5–6 minutes long.

HAMLET SCENE | HANDOUT

You Can't Go Home Again (or, If It's Not One Thing, It's Your Mother)

Hamlet, Scene 1.2.1–164, from the *Folger Shakespeare Library Edition*

King

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, (as 'twere with a defeated joy,
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole)
Taken to wife. Nor have we herein barred
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.
Now follows that you know. Young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Colleaguèd with the dream of his advantage,
He hath not fail'd to pester us with message,
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother—so much for him.
Now for ourself and for this time of meeting.
Thus much the business is: we have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,
Who, impotent and bedrid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose, to suppress
His further gait herein, in that the levies,
The lists, and full proportions are all made

NOTES:

Out of his subject; and we here dispatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltemand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway,
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the King more than the scope
Of these dilated articles allow.

Giving them a paper.

Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

Cornelius/Voltemand

In that and all things will we show our duty.

King

We doubt it nothing. Heartily farewell.

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit; what is 't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane
And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg,
Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

Laertes

My dread lord,
Your leave and favor to return to France,
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

NOTES:

King

Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

Polonius

He hath, my lord, [wrung from me my slow leave
By laborsome petition, and at last
Upon his will I sealed my hard consent.]
I do beseech you give him leave to go.

King

Take thy fair hour, Laertes. Time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will.—
But now, my cousin Hamlet and my son—

Hamlet

A little more than kin and less than kind.

King

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Hamlet

Not so, my lord; I am too much in the sun.

Queen

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not for ever with thy vailèd lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

Hamlet

Ay, madam, it is common.

Queen

If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee?

NOTES:

Hamlet

“Seems,” madam? Nay it is. I know not “seems.”
‘Tis not alone my inky cloak, (good) mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected havior of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can (denote) me truly. These indeed “seem,”
For they are actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passes show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

King

‘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;
That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound
In filial obligation for some term
To do obsequious sorrow. 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.
For what we know must be and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we in our peevish opposition
Take it to heart? Fie, ‘tis a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd, whose common theme
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
From the first corse till he that died today,
“This must be so.” We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing woe and think of us

NOTES:

HAMLET SCENE | HANDOUT | PAGE 5

As of a father; for let the world take note,
You are the most immediate to our throne,
And with no less nobility of love
Than that which dearest father bears his son
Do I impart toward you. For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,
It is most retrograde to our desire,
And we beseech you, bend you to remain
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

Queen

Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet.
I pray thee, stay with us. Go not to Wittenberg.

Hamlet

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

King

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.
Be as ourself in Denmark.—Madam, come.
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart, in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks today
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
And the king's rouse the heaven shall bruit again,
Respeaking earthly thunder. Come away.

Hamlet

O, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt.
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God, God,
How (weary), stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on 't, ah fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden,

NOTES:

HAMLET SCENE | HANDOUT | PAGE 6

That grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature

Possess it merely. 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? 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!),

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!), 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. O, most wicked speed, to post

With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

It is not, nor it cannot come to good.

NOTES:

Excerpted from the *Folger Shakespeare Library Edition* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992)

SHAKESPEARE LESSON PLAN

Using Music to Explore Shakespeare's Characters

David M. Gutierrez,
Albuquerque Academy,
Albuquerque, NM

Standards Covered

National Council of Teachers of English
Standards 1, 3, 4, 8, and 11.

What's On for Today and Why

Music provides a perfect vehicle to help draw students into Shakespeare's plays. In this lesson, students will look at how music is used specifically within the plays to develop characters and themes and to advance the plot. This lesson is particularly useful with students who are aural learners, and students who have difficulty with Shakespeare's language. By understanding characterization and themes through music, students will be able to apply their knowledge to analysis and performance of text.

What To Do

1. Ask students to discuss how music is used to enhance the films and television shows they watch. Does it merely provide entertainment, or does it contribute to the story itself? Ask them to cite examples.

2. As students read *Hamlet*, (or any other Shakespeare play), ask them to think about the following questions:

a. When do songs occur in the play? Read the lyrics carefully. What has happened in the scene leading up to the song? What happens directly after? Which characters are present or referred to while the song is performed? Ask students to fill out the grid in the "Shakespeare's Use of Song and Music" handout as they read. Have them draw some conclusions about how the particular songs help define characters, or highlight themes within the play.

b. If you were to choose a contemporary song to identify each major character in the play, what would



it be, and why? Are your decisions based on the lyrics, the melody, or both? Be able to defend your choice with specific passages from the play.

3. Ask students to share their findings with the class. What conclusions did they reach about the songs? What direct associations did they make with themes or characters?

4. Have students choose a scene to present to the class. Ask students to include a musical component that will help identify characters and reinforce the play's themes. For example, they may substitute other music for the songs that occur in the play. They might also include a brief leitmotif (music associated with a particular character) and play it as the character appears on stage. Ask them how using music affects their ideas about interpretation, staging, and interaction between characters.

What You Need

- Examples of musical motifs from television and film
- Shakespeare's Use of Music Handout

How Did It Go?

Did students have fun coming up with songs for the characters? Did it help them to understand the characters and articulate ideas about them? When students consciously noted the role music plays in television shows and film, did it help them to see its importance in drama as well? Did relating contemporary music to Shakespeare's plays help them to make personal connections to the themes in the plays? Did you find students composing their own songs relating to the text?

Want more?

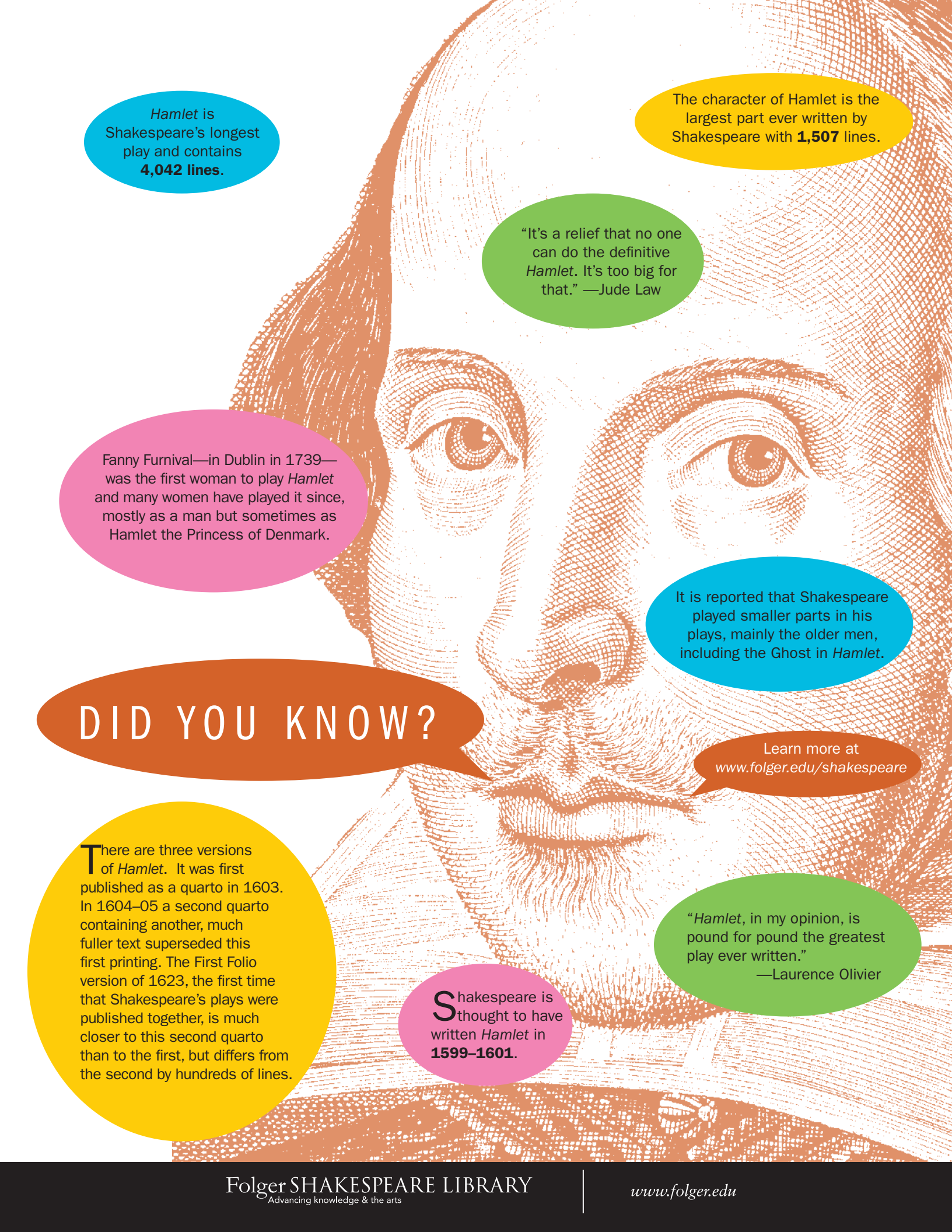


Visit www.folger.edu/lessonplans.

SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF MUSIC HANDOUT

Using Music to Explore Shakespeare's Characters

Act, Scene, line numbers	Action immediately preceding	Action immediately following	Characters Present or Referred To	Themes and Characteristics Highlighted



Hamlet is Shakespeare's longest play and contains **4,042 lines**.

The character of Hamlet is the largest part ever written by Shakespeare with **1,507 lines**.

"It's a relief that no one can do the definitive *Hamlet*. It's too big for that." —Jude Law

Fanny Furnival—in Dublin in 1739—was the first woman to play *Hamlet* and many women have played it since, mostly as a man but sometimes as Hamlet the Princess of Denmark.

It is reported that Shakespeare played smaller parts in his plays, mainly the older men, including the Ghost in *Hamlet*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Learn more at www.folger.edu/shakespeare

There are three versions of *Hamlet*. It was first published as a quarto in 1603. In 1604–05 a second quarto containing another, much fuller text superseded this first printing. The First Folio version of 1623, the first time that Shakespeare's plays were published together, is much closer to this second quarto than to the first, but differs from the second by hundreds of lines.

"*Hamlet*, in my opinion, is pound for pound the greatest play ever written."
—Laurence Olivier

Shakespeare is thought to have written *Hamlet* in **1599–1601**.

FAMOUS LINES AND PHRASES FROM *HAMLET*

Did you know you're quoting Shakespeare when you say...

O, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt...
Hamlet —1.2.133

...frailty, thy name is woman!
Hamlet — 1.2.150

In my mind's eye
Hamlet —1.2.193

This above all: to thine own self be true
Polonius —1.3.84

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
Marcellus —1.4.100

...brevity is the soul of wit
Polonius —2.2.97

Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't.
Polonius —2.2.223-24

What a piece of work is a man...
Hamlet —2.2.327

The play's the thing
Hamlet—2.2.633

To be or not to be—that is the question
Hamlet—3.1.64

Suit the action to the word, the word to the action
Hamlet—3.2.18-19

The lady doth protest too much, methinks.
Queen—3.2.254

Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio
Hamlet—5.1.190-91

Sweets to the sweet
Gertrude—5.1.2

Not a mouse stirring.
Francisco—1.1.11



Graham Hamilton in the title role, *Hamlet*, directed by Joseph Haj, Folger Theatre, 2010. Photo by Carol Pratt. Folger Shakespeare Library.

A little more than kin and less than kind
Hamlet—1.2.67

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
Hamlet—1.5.187

The time is out of joint.
Hamlet—1.5.210

...there is nothing either good or bad but thinking
makes it so,
Hamlet—2.2.268

There's a divinity that shapes our ends.
Hamlet—5.2.11

There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.
Hamlet—5.2.232

The readiness is all.
Hamlet—5.2.236

Shakespeare is often credited with being the first to use these words and phrases. It's estimated that he coined, or at least was the first to write down, around 1,500 words and phrases that we still use today.

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

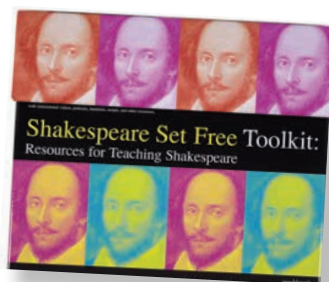


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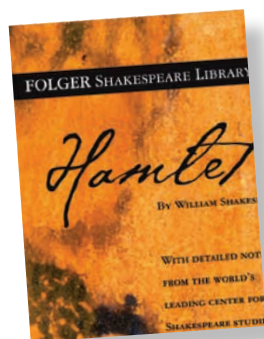


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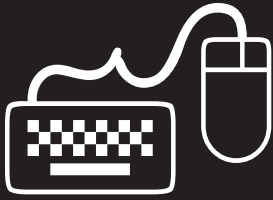


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