



Hamlet

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



AUDIO ON APP



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A Shakespeare Timeline

Shakespeare is born and baptised in Stratford-upon-Avon.

First record of Shakespeare in London, working as a playwright, poet and actor.

Shakespeare buys the house, New Place, in Stratford.

Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway.

His daughter, Susanna, is born.

Twins, Judith and Hamnet, are born.



1564

1582

1583

1584

1585

1586

1587

1588

1589

1590

1591

1592

1593

1594

1595

1596

1597

1598

The Comedy of Errors, Two Gentlemen of Verona

Henry VI part 1, King John

Henry VI part 2, Titus Andronicus

Henry VI part 3, Richard III, The Taming of the Shrew

Begins writing the *Sonnets, Romeo and Juliet, Love's Labour Lost*
A Midsummer Night's Dream, Richard II

The Merchant of Venice, Henry IV part 1

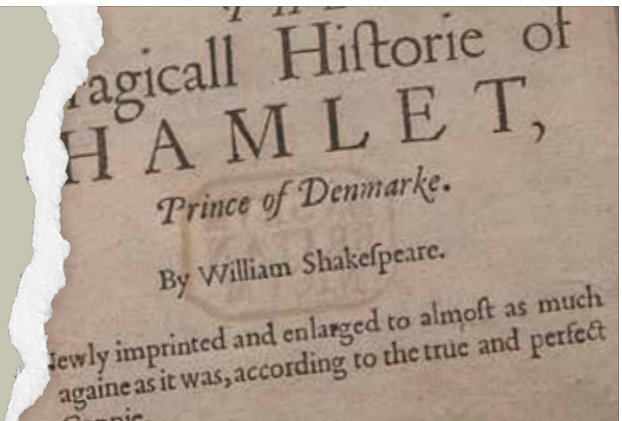
Henry IV part 2, The Merry Wives of Windsor

Much Ado About Nothing

- 1559** Elizabeth is crowned Queen of England. She is known as the Virgin Queen because she never marries.
- 1563** There is an outbreak of the plague or Black Death in England. Further outbreaks occur in 1589, 1603, 1625, and 1636 and culminate with the Great Plague of London in 1665, when an estimated 100,000 people died.
- 1564** French reformer John Calvin dies. Calvin breaks from the Catholic church and is a leading figure in the Protestant Reformation.

- 1577-1580** Sir Francis Drake, an English patriot and adventurer, sails around the world.
- 1569-1607** A rebellion in Ireland against English rule culminates in 1593 with the Nine Years' War. The rebels are ultimately defeated and the number of English settlers increases.
- 1585** Mary Queen of Scots is accused of treason and executed.
- 1585** Colonisation of the Americas continues. Britain's first American colony is established, named Virginia after the queen, and its governor is courtier and

The Play



Hamlet is one of William Shakespeare's most admired and performed tragedies. As with most of Shakespeare's stories, it is based on previous, similar accounts which the playwright developed in his own unique style. Read the text below to find out how Shakespeare got the idea for the story and when he wrote it.

Hamlet

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark by William Shakespeare was probably written and first performed at the beginning of the 1600s, most likely in 1602. It is set in Denmark in the late Middle Ages. Scholars presume that the script was written in 1600 or 1601 and put on stage in 1601 or 1602. There is an earlier mention of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by a certain Gabriel Harvey, which bears the date 1598, but its validity has been questioned. *Hamlet* is a revenge tragedy, which means it is dark and, at times, violent.

Ireland and Denmark

Hamlet, like all of Shakespeare's works, is not an original. First records of the story are in a history of Denmark called *Gesta Danorum (The Deeds of the Danes)*, compiled by Saxo Grammaticus (Saxo the learned), a Danish historian, between 1185 and 1222. One of the tales it contains is called *Vita Amlethi (The Life of Amleth)* and it merges different older plays and sagas into a single story. The book was written in such elegant Latin that Saxo earned himself the name 'Grammaticus'. Doctor Lisa Collinson of the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, an expert in old Nordic languages, now believes that the original story came from Ireland, after she found an 8th or 9th century Irish story about Admlithi of Eire. She thinks the story travelled from Ireland to Denmark and became absorbed into Danish legend.

In 1570, a French author called François de Belleforest translated the Danish story into French, added his own ideas and included it in his collection of *Histoires Tragiques*. Then, in 1589 and in 1596, references appear to a play about Hamlet and the ghost which "cries revenge", a bloody tragedy perhaps written by Thomas Kyd and often referred to as the *Ur-Hamlet*. It is, however, an entry in the 'Register of the Stationers' Company' in 1602 saying that the Lord Chamberlain's Men had recently performed *Hamlet*, which allows scholars to date the Shakespeare version of the play to the beginning of the 1600s.

Hamlet today

Since then, *Hamlet* has been performed innumerable times and, more recently, made into several classic films. The opening line of Hamlet's famous speech, "*To be or not to be, that is the question*", is one of the most well-known quotations worldwide.

- 1 Read the text on pages 10 and 11.
Complete the table with information in chronological order.

	DATE	TITLE	AUTHOR	NOTES
1	8th or 9th century			An Irish story which may have travelled to Denmark and become the basis for <i>Amlethi</i>
2		<i>Vita Amlethi</i>		
3			François de Belleforest	
4		<i>Hamlet?</i> (<i>Ur-Hamlet</i>)		An earlier, bloody, revenge tragedy
5				First mention of a performance in 1602

- 2 Use the table and some of the following expressions to retell the history of the different versions of *Hamlet*.

First Then Next After that Subsequently Finally

Speaking impersonally

One way to speak about literature or history impersonally is by using the passive voice.

- 3 Find examples of the passive in the text and highlight them.
- 4 Rewrite the sentences you have highlighted in the active form as in the example:
e.g.: *Hamlet* was written at the beginning of the 1600s.
William Shakespeare wrote Hamlet at the beginning of the 1600s.

PRODUCE

- 5 Now listen to these sentences based on the text and write them in the passive form.

The Main Characters

- 1 Look at the people and read the texts.
Highlight the words referring to **relationships or role** and those referring to **character** in two different colours.
- 2 Focus on the words referring to character. Decide if the characters are
 - complex human beings.
 - simple, mono-dimensional caricatures.

The Danish Royal Family



The Ghost is the spirit of Hamlet's dead father, King Hamlet, who ruled Denmark until very recently. He is a restless and tortured spirit who haunts Elsinore Castle in Denmark.



King Claudius is Hamlet's uncle and the new king of Denmark after the death of Hamlet's father. He is ruthless and self-important but he is also passionately in love with his new wife. He can appear diplomatic and benevolent when it suits him. On rare occasions he shows signs of guilt.



Queen Gertrude is Hamlet's mother. She was the wife of King Hamlet until his death and she is now the wife of the new king, Claudius. She is passionate yet fragile. She is easily swayed by the men in her life and does not have a strong character. She is a devoted wife but also a concerned mother.

Polonius's Family



Polonius is the king's counsellor and Lord Chamberlain (head of the Royal Palace), and the father of Laertes and Ophelia. He is verbose and enjoys giving advice. At times, he does not seem very clever but rather pompous, pedantic and short-sighted.



Laertes is a dutiful son to Polonius and an affectionate brother to Ophelia. He is also hot-headed and arrogant. He enjoys his freedom and is a man of action.



Ophelia is Polonius's daughter. She is sweet and sensitive but also submissive to her father and her brother. She does not decide things for herself and is willing to let others guide her. She is very fragile and vulnerable.

English in Shakespeare's Time

In Renaissance times, some of the commonly used words were different to the expressions we use today.

RENAISSANCE VOCABULARY

Everyday language

- 1 Match some Renaissance English to the modern equivalent. Start with the more obvious ones then see if you can work out the others. What made you make your choices?

Renaissance expressions	Modern English expressions
aye / yea	often
fare-thee-anon	please
fare-thee-well	nice to see you
fie	over there
good e'en	really
good morrow	here
grammarcy	thank you
hither	no
how now?	bye, see you later
lord-keep-thee	yes
nay	good evening
ne'r	damn
oft	take care
prithce/pray	how are you?
verily	hello
well met	never
yon	bye

HAMLET'S FIRST SOLILOQUY

The initial scenes in a play describe the setting and introduce the characters and their story. In the case of *Hamlet*, the first two scenes give key information and are set in Elsinore Castle in Denmark.

1 Read the summary of the story so far. Answer the questions.

- a Who is the new king of Denmark and who is his queen?
- b What has been seen on the castle ramparts?
- c What do the new king and queen ask Prince Hamlet to do?

THE STORY SO FAR

King Hamlet has died leaving a wife, Gertrude, and a son, Prince Hamlet. His brother, Claudius, succeeds to the throne and takes Queen Gertrude as his wife. Some soldiers have seen a ghostly figure walking the royal castle ramparts while they have been keeping watch. They call Horatio, who they know to be educated and clever, to witness it, too. Horatio arrives at the appointed time and soon the ghost appears. He notices that it looks just like their king, Hamlet, who has just died and fears that its presence means disaster. Horatio decides to inform Prince Hamlet about the apparition.

Meanwhile, inside the castle, the new King Claudius is celebrating his crowning and his marriage. Gertrude and Claudius ask Prince Hamlet not to go back to university in Wittenberg and to try to get over his father's death, to stop mourning and looking so sad. Hamlet agrees to stay at Elsinore. When the king, queen and courtiers leave, Hamlet reveals his state of mind.

2 Before you read, predict.

- a How do you think Hamlet feels?
- b What might he say about his mother, father and uncle?



1 Read the text. Use the notes on the right.

HAMLET'S FIRST SOLILOQUY

ACT I SCENE II

HAMLET

- 1 O, that this too too solid flesh would melt
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
- 5 How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in
nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
- 10 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!
- 15 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
- 20 With which she follow'd my poor father's
body,
Like Niobe, all tears:--why she, even she--
O, God! a beast, that wants discourse of
reason,
Would have mourn'd longer--married with
my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my
father
- 25 Than I to Hercules: within a month:
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not nor it cannot come to good:
But break, my heart; for I must hold my
tongue.

Hamlet says he wishes he could die, or that it wasn't against his religion to commit suicide.

He says life doesn't seem worth living.

He compares the world around him to a garden which is overgrown with weeds, taken over by disgusting plants.

He cannot believe how things have turned out: his father died just two months ago, perhaps less.

He was an excellent king: much better than his brother (Claudius). He was loving and protective of his wife. Hamlet says it is hard to think about the past. He recalls how his mother seemed so in love with his father but then, in less than a month...

Hamlet says he cannot bear to think about it and that women are weak creatures. His mother married his uncle less than a month after his father's funeral at which she cried so many tears. He thinks that even an animal would have mourned for a longer time.

He describes his uncle as being the opposite of his father and says the speed with which his mother entered into this incestuous relationship is shameful and that it is not a good thing and no good will come of it. He says his heart will break because he cannot talk openly about his feelings.

Understand and Analyse

UNDERSTAND

1 Number the following in the correct order.

- a Hamlet speaks about his father.
- b Hamlet speaks about his mother.
- c Hamlet speaks about his life and the state of the world.

2 Read the sentences and decide if they are true or false.

- a Hamlet is so distraught that he is almost suicidal. True / False
- b He thinks his mother should have waited two months before remarrying. True / False
- c He says that his father was both a great king and a good husband. True / False
- d He says that Claudius is very different from his father. True / False
- e He thinks that women are usually strong but that his mother is weak. True / False
- g He says that if he tells anyone about this, it will break his heart. True / False

ANALYSE

3 What comparisons does Hamlet make? Match the items below.

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| a <input type="checkbox"/> the world | 1 a satyr |
| b <input type="checkbox"/> King Hamlet | 2 Hercules |
| c <input type="checkbox"/> King Claudius | 3 an unweeded garden |
| d <input type="checkbox"/> Queen Gertrude | 4 Hyperion |
| e <input type="checkbox"/> Prince Hamlet | 5 Niobe |

4 Find out more about each comparison and discuss them in pairs, as in the example.

- a He compares the world to an unweeded garden *to show how nothing is being taken care of, nothing is in order, and how, when that happens, unnatural and ugly things occur.*

THINK

5 One of the main themes of *Hamlet* is political corruption. Which of the comparisons underlines the idea of a corrupted state? Give reasons for your answer.

PRODUCE

6 Go to *Hamlet* online and do the gapfill activity. Use your answers to the exercises above to help you.

Vocabulary Building

“weary, stale, flat and unprofitable”

Descriptive adjectives using *and*

- 1 Look at the examples. When do we usually use ‘and’ with adjectives?
 - *Her desk was new and expensive.*
 - *Her desk was new, large and expensive.*
 - *She sat at her new, expensive desk.*
 - *She sat at her new, large, expensive desk.*
- 2 Make sentences with and sentences without ‘and’ for these nouns and adjectives.
 - a actor (tall-dark-handsome)
 - b sports car (small-red-Italian)
 - c garden (colourful-small-overgrown)
 - d vase (large-antique-Chinese)
 - e boots (new-shiny-brown)

Descriptive adjectives – order

- 3 Look at the example. Say what the adjectives tell you (*opinion, size, shape, age, colour, origin, material, purpose*).

She had a fantastic, expensive, new, red and black, English, carbon fiber racing bike

- 4 Look at the order of the adjectives in Exercise 3. Now make sentences by putting the adjectives below in the correct order.
 - a I was over the moon when he gave me a/an (*gold, beautiful, engagement*) ring.
.....
 - b What is that (*Japanese, old, ugly, black, big*) car doing parked on my driveway?
.....
 - c I need a (*bus, new, London, monthly*) pass.
.....
 - d He bought a/an (*Italian, grey, elegant, silk, new*) tie to wear with his new suit.
.....
 - e If you want to cut the meat, you’ll have to have a (*carving, decent, steel*) knife.
.....

CULTURE

Elizabethan Theatre



- 1 The first theatres were built in England during the Elizabethan Age. Look at the drawing on page 21 and think about the following, then read the text and check.

Where do you think actors

- got changed?
- kept their costumes and props?
- made surprise entrances onto the stage?

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The first theatres

Up until 1576, when London's first purpose-built theatre was constructed, plays had been performed in inn yards or on stages which were temporarily erected for the event. However, drama was very popular during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I and it made sense for theatre companies to have their own buildings where they could rehearse and perform... and make money. So in 1576 'The Theatre' opened in Shoreditch, London, followed by The Curtain (1577), The Rose (1587), The Swan (1595) and The Globe (1599). Shakespeare was an actor at The Theatre but then he and his group of players built their own theatre, The Globe, on the south bank of the River Thames. Most theatres, or playhouses as they were also known, were built on the south bank as that area was outside the city limits – theatres had a bad reputation and were places where diseases, like the plague, easily spread, so they were discouraged and eventually banned from the city. Theatres, or playhouses, were typically oval in shape and open to the sky in the centre. They opened during the day to make the most of natural light. When evening fell, candles were lit but, since theatres were made of wood and thatch, fires were often a risk.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1648, not long after Shakespeare died, the Puritans who controlled parliament at that time ordered all theatres to be demolished, all actors to be caught and whipped and all theatre-goers to be fined five shillings!

From Reading to Performing





- 1 Before you listen, predict how the speech will be read. Use these words and add some of your own.

happily/sadly/solemnly


angrily/with a sense of frustration

slowly/fluently/wearily



- 2   Listen and see if you were right. Discuss the tone used. Try for yourself. Read the script aloud with the recording and then without. Imitate reading speed, intonation and tone.



ACTORS AND EMOTIONS

- 3  Which emotions does Hamlet need to project during this speech? Download a copy of Hamlet's speech on page 17 from *Hamlet* online. Write the feelings you want the actor to project in the margin of the speech. Discuss which facial expressions and gestures could help communicate the emotions.

Review

- c  Now choose a different theme or motif. In pairs discuss how it is developed in the course of the play. Make notes.
- d Write a short paragraph about your theme or motif.
- e  Exchange paragraphs. Read the work of other pairs.

6 REVENGE TRAGEDY

- a Review the information on pages 32-33 with a partner.
- b Which words are missing from these notes?

The Structure of Revenge Tragedy

- – apparition of the ghost to the hero, presentation of the motivation for revenge
 - – planning of the revenge by the hero
 - – face-off between the hero and the target of his revenge
 - – hesitation of the hero
 - – carrying out of the revenge, multiple deaths
- c To what extent does *Hamlet* respect this structure?
- d List six other characteristics of revenge tragedies and say how they are used in *Hamlet*.

7 ELIZABETHAN THEATRE

- a Work in groups of maximum 10 students, subdivided into pairs or threes. Choose one topic for each pair or three.
- Historical background
 - The theatre building
 - Audiences
 - Actors and playwrights
 - Costumes and make-up
 - Special effects
- b Review the information for your topic on the appropriate page and research new information online.
- c Present the information to the other members of your group.
- d When you have finished your presentation, invite questions.

Exam Practice

F B2 FIRST ENGLISH TEST: READING AND USE OF ENGLISH PART 2

TIP: Read the whole sentence before deciding which word goes in each space. Often the words after the space are as important as those before it.

For questions 1 – 8, read the text below and think of the word which best fits each gap. Use only one word in each gap. There is an example at the beginning.

Example: (0)to.....

SAM WANAMAKER'S DREAM

When, in 1950, American actor and Shakespeare enthusiast, Sam Wanamaker went to work in England, he was keen (0)..... visit the site of the original Globe Theatre. However, (1)..... of a memorial to the Bard's playhouse, he found only a dirty plaque on the side of an old building. Shocked, Wanamaker decided that he would rebuild the Globe (2)..... close as possible to the original site. He set (3)..... the Shakespeare Globe Trust, and, (4)..... opposition from the local council and scepticism among his theatre colleagues, he succeeded (5)..... raising over \$10 million. He even spent a lot of his own earnings (6)..... the project.

Building work on the theatre started in 1993. Unfortunately, Wanamaker died before it was completed. The Shakespeare Globe Trust (7)..... on with the project and, finally, in June 1997, the new Globe Theatre was opened by the Queen. (8)..... then, it has become one of London's most popular tourist attractions.

Hamlet

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

“To be, or not to be, that is the question”

Hamlet's life is turned upside down when his father, the king, dies and his mother Queen Gertrude marries her brother-in-law, Claudius. When the ghost of his dead father appears to him, Hamlet starts a long and difficult journey for the truth.

Enjoy this powerful and enduring story of revenge in Shakespeare's original language with a carefully graded modern English translation.

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	5	B1	Preliminary
●	6	B1+	Towards First
	7	B2	First