

# **Hamlet, Prince of Denmark**

## **by William Shakespeare**

**NOTE: BE SURE TO READ IN PRINT VIEW!**

### **1. Synopsis and Key Scenes from the Play**

### **2. Excerpt from the Play**

#### **Synopsis:**

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is home from school to mourn the death of his father, King Hamlet, who has died two months earlier. Hamlet is disgusted by the marriage of his newly widowed mother, Queen Gertrude, to his Uncle, King Hamlet's brother, Claudius, who now has the throne.

Shortly thereafter, a ghost has appeared to guards on nightly watch as well as Hamlet's good friend, Horatio, who thinks the spirit has a likeness to the former King Hamlet. When prompted to speak by Horatio, the ghost will not. Horatio asks Hamlet to wait for the ghost and see if it will speak to him. The ghost of his father beckons Hamlet to follow him and reveals that his brother Claudius poisoned him in the ear. Hamlet vows to avenge his father's murder.

Meanwhile, Laertes, son to the King's advisor Polonius is set to return to France. Before he leaves, he tells Ophelia, his sister, to be weary of Hamlet's affections towards her. Polonius gives Laertes advice on how to act abroad and orders Ophelia to stay away from Hamlet.

Hamlet's sanity begins to be questioned by all. Claudius and Gertrude are both concerned; Polonius suggests it is Ophelia's rejection of his advances. Claudius and Polonius decide to spy on Hamlet and Ophelia. Claudius further employs Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two childhood friends of Hamlet, to spy on him further. Hamlet quickly realizes their intentions.

A troupe of players happens to be in town and Hamlet utilizes the actors to determine the validity of his father's murder. He will have them perform the very act of murder, killing a king through poison in the ear, which the ghost has claimed. He asks Horatio to watch Claudius' reaction throughout the play. While the court is watching, Claudius is enraged and leaves the play convincing Hamlet that he is the murderer.

Hamlet comes upon Claudius in the chapel, kneeling down to pray. He considers killing him then and there, but since Claudius is in mid-prayer, and will therefore go to heaven if he dies, Hamlet decides to wait until Claudius is committing some sin, so that he will go to hell like Hamlet's father before him.

Hamlet meets Gertrude in her room and an argument ensues. When he hears Polonius who is hiding behind the curtain shout for help, he stabs him thinking it is Claudius. The ghost appears to Hamlet to refocus him on the task of killing Claudius.

Fortinbras, Prince of Norway, whose father's lands were seized by the late King, decides to head to Denmark. Claudius demands that Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern head for England. Claudius has sent a letter with them ordering Hamlet's execution during the trip. While at sea, however, Hamlet discovers his planned murder and switches the orders, causing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to be executed. Hamlet returns to Denmark.

Meanwhile back at Elsinore, Ophelia has gone mad with grief. Laertes returns from France and learns it was Hamlet who has killed his father, Polonius. Claudius suggests that Laertes duel with Hamlet and poisons the tip of Laertes foil for a fatal blow. If Laertes loses the duel, Claudius will put poison into a drink for Hamlet. Gertrude enters and announces that Ophelia has drowned.

In the graveyard, Hamlet reminisces on a friend of his whose skull he has found. When the procession arrives with Ophelia's corpse, Laertes and Hamlet argue. A duel is scheduled.

During the fight, Gertrude accidentally drinks from the poisoned chalice and dies. Hamlet is wounded with the poisoned sword, but in a scuffle, the foils are switched and Laertes is also wounded with the poisoned foil. In dying, Laertes

confesses Claudius' plot to kill Hamlet. Hamlet stabs Claudius and Hamlet dies asking Horatio to tell his story. The Norwegian forces arrive at Elsinore, and Prince Fortinbras seizes control of Denmark.

### **Key Scenes:**

#### **ACT 1 SCENE 2 - SETTING THE SCENE**

As the court celebrates the marriage of Hamlet's mother (Gertrude) to his uncle (Claudius), Hamlet finds out that his father's ghost is haunting the castle. He is determined to confront it.

**Hamlet** *If it assume my noble father's person/I'll speak to it though hell itself should gape / And bid me hold my peace*

#### **ACT 1 SCENE 5 - HAMLET MEETS THE GHOST**

The ghost of Old Hamlet reveals to his son that he was murdered by Claudius and demands that young Hamlet seeks revenge. Hamlet decides to feign madness in an attempt to find proof of his uncle's guilt.

**Ghost** *Thus was I sleeping, by a brother's hand/of life, of crown and queen, at once despatched*

#### **ACT 2 SCENE 2 - CLAUDIUS BECOMES SUSPICIOUS**

Polonius, chief adviser to the new king, tells Claudius that Hamlet's madness is due to unrequited love for Ophelia, Polonius's daughter, but Claudius is not convinced and plots with Polonius to spy on Hamlet. Hamlet's childhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, have been summoned to the castle by the king and queen to keep close watch on him. A troupe of actors also arrives at Elsinore to entertain the court and are persuaded to include some lines written by Hamlet.

**Hamlet** *The play's the thing/Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.*

#### **ACT 3 SCENE 1 - HAMLET'S TURMOIL**

Claudius and Polonius eavesdrop when Hamlet meets Ophelia. Hamlet speaks the famous soliloquy ("To be or not to be") and rejects Ophelia, whom he had previously professed love to, believing that she is in league with his uncle and Polonius.

**Hamlet** *Get thee to a nunnery, go, farewell. Or if thou needs must marry, marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them.*

#### **ACT 3 SCENE 2 - THE PLAY**

In front of the king and the whole court, the players perform a scene which closely follows the Ghost's account of his murder by Claudius. When Claudius cuts the performance short, Hamlet takes this a proof of his guilt. He is now determined to revenge his father's death immediately.

**Hamlet** *Now could I drink hot blood / And do such bitter business as the day / Would quake to look on.*

#### **ACT 3 SCENE 3 - CLAUDIUS'S PLOTTING**

Claudius arranges Hamlet's banishment to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He confesses his crime in prayer. Hamlet finds Claudius on his knees praying but cannot bring himself to kill him there.

**Claudius** *O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven: / It hath the primal eldest curse upon't / A brother's murder.*

#### **ACT 3 SCENE 4 - THE CLOSET SCENE - HAMLET KILLS POLONIUS**

Unable to kill his uncle, Hamlet challenges his mother about her relationship with Claudius and admits he has been feigning madness. Hearing a noise, he believes that Claudius is eavesdropping, draws a sword and kills Polonius.

**Gertrude** *O what a rash and bloody deed is this!*

#### **ACT 4 SCENE 2 - HAMLET IS BANISHED**

Claudius arranges Hamlet's immediate transportation to England and sends a letter to the English king demanding that he arranges Hamlet's immediate death.

**Claudius** *Do it, England, / For like the hectic in my blood he rages, / And thou must cure me.*

#### **ACT 4 SCENE 6 - TWO BEREAVED SONS RETURN**

Polonius's son Laertes has returned to Denmark, determined to revenge his father's murder and blaming Claudius. Hamlet escapes his banishment and also returns. Already distraught, Laertes also learns that his sister Ophelia, driven mad by Hamlet's rejection and her father's murder, has drowned.

**Laertes** *Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged / Most thoroughly for my father*

#### **ACT 5 SCENE 2 - THE TRAGIC CLIMAX**

Unaware that Claudius has conspired to have Laertes murder Hamlet during a staged duel and for it to appear accidental, Hamlet accepts Laertes's challenge in good faith. As they fight, Gertrude drinks the poisoned wine that Claudius had intended for Hamlet and dies. Laertes manages to wound Hamlet slightly with the poisoned tip of his sword. In the heat of the fight, the swords are switched. Laertes is in turn wounded by Hamlet, using the poisoned weapon, and dies. Hamlet dies in Horatio's arms. Fortinbras arrives at the head of a Norwegian army.

**Horatio** *Now cracks a noble heart. Goodnight, sweet prince/And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest*

**ACT 3 SCENE 1 - HAMLET'S TURMOIL**

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<p><b>ACT III SCENE I</b>      <i>A room in the castle.</i></p>	<p><b>Explanatory Notes for Act 3, Scene 1</b> From <i>Hamlet, Prince of Denmark</i>. Ed. K. Deighton. London: Macmillan.</p>
<p>[ Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN ]</p>	
<p>KING CLAUDIUS      And can you, by no drift of circumstance,  Get from him why he puts on this confusion,  Grating so harshly all his days of quiet  With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?</p>	<p>1. <b>drift of circumstance</b>, "roundabout method. 'Drift' occurs in ii. 1. 10, and 'circumstance' in this same sense, in i. 5. 127, and the two words in <i>T. C.</i> iii. 3. 113, 4, 'I do not strain at the position, — ... but at the author's <i>drift</i>; Who in his <i>circumstance</i> expressly proves,'" etc. (Cl. Pr. Edd.). Cp. also iii. 3. 83, below.</p> <p>2. <b>Get from him ... confusion</b>, find out from him what has led him to behave in this excited manner; cp. <i>T. C.</i> ii. 3. 135, "the savage strangeness he <i>puts on</i>": <i>J. C.</i> i. 3. 60, "And <i>put on</i> fear and cast yourself in wonder"; in neither passage is there any idea of making a pretence. Schmidt takes <b>puts on</b> as = incite, instigate, but the two next lines show that the confusion refers to Hamlet himself only.</p>
<p>ROSENCRANTZ      He does confess he feels himself distracted;  But from what cause he will by no means speak.</p>	<p>3,4. <b>Grating ... lunacy</b>, thus disturbing his peaceful life with outbursts of dangerous madness; the figurative sense of <b>grating</b> is from the literal sense of two bodies roughly rubbing against each other, as in i. H. IV. iii. 1. 132, "Or a dry wheel <i>grate</i> on the axle-tree."</p> <p>6. <b>he will .... speak</b>, he cannot by any method be persuaded to say.</p>
<p>GUILDENSTERN      Nor do we find him forward to be sounded,  But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,  When we would bring him on to some confession  Of his true state.</p>	<p>7. <b>forward to be sounded</b>, inclined to let us find out what is at the bottom of his mind.</p> <p>8. <b>But, with ... aloof</b>, but with a cunning such as is seen in mad people holds us at a distance.</p> <p>11. <b>Most like a gentleman</b>, with the greatest courtesy.</p>
<p>QUEEN GERTRUDE      Did he receive you well?      10</p>	
<p>ROSENCRANTZ      Most like a gentleman.</p>	
<p>GUILDENSTERN      But with much forcing of his disposition.</p>	
<p>ROSENCRANTZ      Niggard of question; but, of our demands,  Most free in his reply.</p>	<p>13, 4. <b>Niggard ... reply</b>, if <b>question</b> is used in its ordinary sense, this statement is not true, for Hamlet had plied them well with questions of various kinds, whereas they can scarcely be said to have made any <b>demands</b> of him. Warburton therefore would transpose <b>Niggard</b> and <b>Most free</b>. Against this it may be urged that Hamlet could not be said to be niggard of his answers when none were required of him. Malone and others take <b>question</b> as = conversation, discourse, a sense which it often bears in Shakespeare. But here again we are as far from the fact as ever, for Hamlet conversed with them freely on a variety of subjects. The real explanation seems to me that suggested by the Cl. Pr. Edd., that "perhaps they did not intend to give a correct account of the interview." <i>Possibly</i> after Hamlet's generous forbearance in not forcing them to a confession as to the reason of their coming, they may have felt some scruples of delicacy in betraying what they knew; <i>probably</i> they felt that if they reported much of the conversation it would be discovered how completely Hamlet had seen through them, what poor diplomatists they had shown themselves; <b>of our demands</b>, as regarded our demands; see Abb. § 173.</p>
<p>QUEEN GERTRUDE      Did you assay him?  To any pastime?</p>	

<p>ROSENCRANTZ</p> <p>Madam, it so fell out, that certain players</p> <p>We o'er-raught on the way: of these we told him;</p> <p>And there did seem in him a kind of joy</p> <p>To hear of it: they are about the court,</p> <p>And, as I think, they have already order</p> <p>This night to play before him.</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>14, 5. <b>Did you pastime?</b> did you test him as regards to his inclination to take part in any amusement? Cp. <i>M. M.</i> i. 2. 186, "bid herself <i>assay him</i>." The substantive <i>assay</i>, which is merely another spelling of <i>essay</i>, from Lat. <i>exagium</i>, a weighing, is now used only in the literal sense of the testing of metal or weights.</p> <p>17. <b>o'er-raught</b>, passed; literally over-reached.</p> <p>20. <b>as I think</b>. I believe; <b>they ... order</b>, they have already received orders.</p> <p>23. <b>matter</b>, in this word, according to Delius, there is a tinge of contempt.</p> <p>24. <b>doth much content me</b>, is a great satisfaction to me.</p> <p>26. <b>give him ... edge</b>, it seems doubtful whether this means 'sharpen his inclination,' or 'push him towards,' in which sense we commonly use the verb to 'egg.' The next line seems to indicate the latter meaning.</p>
<p>LORD POLONIUS</p> <p>'Tis most true:</p> <p>And he beseech'd me to entreat your majesties</p> <p>To hear and see the matter.</p>		<p>29. <b>closely</b>, privately, secretly.</p> <p>31. <b>Affront</b>, meet face to face, confront; the only sense of the word in Shakespeare. whereas its only meaning now is to 'insult,' from the idea of meeting with too bold a face.</p>
<p>KING CLAUDIUS</p> <p>With all my heart; and it doth much content me</p> <p>To hear him so inclined.</p> <p>Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,</p> <p>And drive his purpose on to these delights.</p>		<p>32. <b>lawful espials</b>, who may justifiably act as spies in such a matter; used again in this concrete sense in <i>i. H. VI.</i> i. 4. 8, iv. 3. 6. Cp. "intelligence," <i>K. J.</i> iv. 2. 116; "speculations," <i>Lear.</i> iii. 1. 24.</p> <p>33. <b>bestow ourselves</b>, station ourselves.</p> <p>34. <b>encounter</b>, meeting, interview: <b>frankly</b>, freely; <i>F. franc</i>, free.</p> <p>35. <b>And gather ... behaved</b>, and infer from his behaviour.</p> <p>36. <b>affliction</b> of his love, the passionate love he feels.</p>
<p>ROSENCRANTZ</p> <p>We shall, my lord.</p> <p>[<i>Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN</i>]</p>		<p>37. <b>That thus ... for</b>, which causes him to suffer in this way.</p>
<p>KING CLAUDIUS</p> <p>Sweet Gertrude, leave us too;</p> <p>For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,</p> <p>That he, as 'twere by accident, may here</p> <p>Affront Ophelia:</p> <p>Her father and myself, lawful espials,</p> <p>Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing, unseen,</p> <p>We may of their encounter frankly judge,</p> <p>And gather by him, as he is behaved,</p>	<p>30</p>	

<p>QUEEN GERTRUDE</p>	<p>If 't be the affliction of his love or no</p> <p>That thus he suffers for.</p> <p>I shall obey you.</p> <p>And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish</p> <p>That your good beauties be the happy cause</p> <p>Of Hamlet's wildness: so      40 shall I hope your virtues</p> <p>Will bring him to his wonted way again,</p> <p>To both your honours.</p>	<p>38. <b>for your part</b>, as regards you.</p> <p>39. <b>your good beauties</b>, the fascinations of your great beauty; <b>be the happy cause</b>, may happily prove to be the cause.</p> <p>40-2. <b>so shall I ... honours</b>, for in that case I shall be able to cherish the hope that your various virtues will restore him to his usual healthy state of mind, with a result honourable alike to him and to you.</p> <p>43. <b>Gracious</b>, addressed to the king; cp. "High and mighty," iv. 7. 43; <b>so please you</b>, provided it is agreeable to you.</p> <p>44. <b>bestow ourselves</b>, place ourselves where we shall be unseen; cp. 1. 33, above; <b>Read on</b>, fix your eyes on as though reading.</p> <p>45, 6. <b>That show ... loneliness</b>, the appearance of your being occupied in that way will account for you being here all alone.</p>
<p>OPHELIA</p> <p>[Exit QUEEN GERTRUDE]</p>	<p>Madam, I wish it may.</p>	<p>46-9. <b>We are ... himself</b>, we are often guilty, — as only too common experience shows, — of coating over our intentions, vile as the devil himself, with looks of sanctity and pious acts; <b>forsugar o'er</b>, cp. <i>i. H. IV. i. 3. 251</i>, "Why, what a <i>candy deal of courtesy</i> The fawning greyhound then did proffer me!" and below, iii. 1. 156, iii. 2. 65.</p>
<p>LORD POLONIUS</p> <p>[To OPHELIA]</p>	<p>Ophelia, walk you here. Gracious, so please you, We will bestow ourselves.</p>	<p>51. <b>beautified ... art</b>, which owes its beauty to rouge, etc., cp. <i>Cymb. iii. 4. 51, 2</i>, "Some jay of Italy Whose mother was her painting."</p> <p>52. <b>Is not ... it</b>, is not more ugly in comparison with the thing to which it owes its beauty; cp. <i>Macb. iii. 4. 64</i>, "O, these flaws and starts Impostors to true fear."</p>
<p>KING CLAUDIUS</p>	<p>Read on this book;</p> <p>That show of such an exercise may colour</p> <p>Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this,—</p> <p>'Tis too much proved—that with devotion's visage</p> <p>And pious action we do sugar o'er</p> <p>The devil himself.</p> <p>[Aside] O, 'tis too true!</p> <p>How smart a lash that      50 speech doth give my conscience!</p> <p>The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,</p> <p>Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it</p> <p>Than is my deed to my most painted word:</p> <p>O heavy burthen!</p>	<p>53. <b>Than is ... word</b>, than are my actions in comparison with the specious language in which I dress them up; <b>most painted</b>, thickly plastered over with specious words; <b>deed</b> does not refer to the particular deed of murdering his brother, but to his base actions generally.</p>

LORD POLONIUS I hear him coming: let's withdraw, my lord.

[Exeunt KING CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS]

[Enter HAMLET]

HAMLET

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,

The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,

The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,

The insolence of office and the spurns

That patient merit of the unworthy takes,

56. **To be ... question**, whether to continue to live or not, that is the doubt I have to solve.

57. **whether ... mind**, whether it shows a nobler mind.

58. **slings**, properly that which casts a stone, here the missile itself; **outrageous**, violent, cruel. For more on this please [click here](#).

59. **a sea of troubles**, many pages have been written upon the incongruity of taking arms against a sea, but a **sea of troubles** is a common expression in other languages besides English for a host, immensity, of troubles, and the mixture of metaphors is not greater than in many passages of Shakespeare; not much greater, for instance, than the "*music of his honeyvows*," 1. 156 below.

61. **No more**, i.e. for death is nothing more than a sleep; **to say we end**, to assure ourselves that we thus put an end to, etc.

63. 4. **'tis a ... wish'd**, that is a conclusion for which we may well pray.

65. **there's the rub**, there is the difficulty; if we could be quite sure that death was a dreamless sleep, we should not need to have any hesitation about encountering it; **rub**, obstacle; a metaphor from the game of bowls; cp. *K. J.* iii. iv. 128, "the breath of what I mean to speak Shall blow each dust, each straw, each little *rub* Out of the path": *H. V.* ii. 2. 188, "For every *rub* is smoothed on our way."

66-8. **For in ... pause**, for the doubt as to what dreams may come in that sleep of death, when we have put off this encumbrance of the body ("this muddy vesture of decay," *M. V.* v. 1. 64), must compel us to hesitate when considering the question of suicide; though **coil** is elsewhere used by Shakespeare as = turmoil, tumult, and may here include that meaning also, the words **shuffled off** seem to show that the primary idea was that of a garment impeding freedom of action.

68, 9. **there's the respect ... life**, in that lies the consideration which makes misfortune so long-lived; if it were not for that consideration, we should quickly put an end to calamity by ending our lives.

70. **the whips ... time**, the blows and flouts to which one is exposed in this life; here **time** seems to be opposed to eternity, as in *Macb.* i. 7. 6, "If ... that but this blow Might be the be-all and the end-all here. But here upon this bank and shoal of *time* We'd jump *the world to come*"; and the **whips and scorns** to be a general expression for the particulars in the next four lines, "the oppressor's wrong," "the law's delay," "the insolence of office," coming under the head of **whips**, and "the proud man's contumely," "the pangs of despised love," and "the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes," under that of **scorns**. It is, however, possible that **of time** may be equivalent to "of the times," as e.g. in *K. J.* v. 2. 12, "I am not glad that such a sore of *time* Should seek a plaster by contemn'd revolt."

73. **The insolence of office**, the insolent behaviour with which men in office treat those who have to sue to them; cp. the term "Jack in office," and *i. H. VI.* i. 1. 175, "But long I will not be *Jack out of office*."

74. **That patient ... takes**, that men of merit have patiently to endure at the hands of those who have no claim to respect. Furness remarks, "In the enumeration of these ills, is it not evident that Shakespeare is speaking in his own person? As Johnson says, these are not the evils that would particularly strike a *prince*."

75. **his quietus**, his release, acquittance; **quietus** was the technical

	<p>When he himself might his quietus make</p> <p>With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,</p> <p>To grunt and sweat under a weary life,</p> <p>But that the dread of something after death,</p> <p>The undiscover'd country from whose bourn</p> <p>No traveller returns, 80</p> <p>puzzles the will</p> <p>And makes us rather bear those ills we have</p> <p>Than fly to others that we know not of?</p> <p>Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;</p> <p>And thus the native hue of resolution</p> <p>Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,</p> <p>And enterprises of great pith and moment</p> <p>With this regard their currents turn awry,</p> <p>And lose the name of action.--Soft you now!</p> <p>The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons</p> <p>Be all my sins remember'd.</p>	<p>term for acquittance of all debts at the audit of accounts in the Exchequer, and is used as late as Burke, <i>Speech on Economical Reform</i>. Cp. Sonn. cxxvi. 12, "Her audit, though delay'd, answer'd must be, And her <i>quietus</i> is to render thee."</p> <p>76. <b>With a bare bodkin</b>, with a mere dagger. Though Shakespeare probably had in his mind the idea also of an <i>unsheathed</i> dagger, his primary idea seems to be the easiness with which the release could be obtained, and the word <b>bodkin</b>, a diminutive, = small dagger, goes to confirm this notion. Among other passages in which the word occurs, Steevens quotes Beaumont and Fletcher, <i>The Custom of the Country</i>, ii. 3. 87, "Out with your <i>bodkin</i>, Your pocket-dagger, your stiletto": <b>fardels</b>, burdens; "a diminutive of F. <i>farde</i>, a burden, still in use in the sense of 'bale of coffee'" ... (Skeat, <i>Ety. Dict.</i>).</p> <p>77. <b>grunt</b>, groan; the word, though now having a ludicrous association, had none to the ears of our forefathers. Steevens gives several instances of its use, and Staunton one from Armin's <i>Nest of Ninnies</i>, which is particularly apt; "how the fat fooles of this age will <i>gronte and sweat</i> under their massie <i>burden</i>."</p> <p>79. <b>ourn</b>, boundary, confines; cp. <i>Lear</i>. iv. 6. 57, "From the dread summit of this chalky <i>ourn</i>."</p> <p>80. <b>No traveller returns</b>, to the cavil that this is in opposition to the fact of the ghost of the king having re-visited the earth, Coleridge conclusively replies, "If it be necessary to remove the apparent contradiction, — if it be not rather a great beauty, — surely it were easy to say that no traveller returns to this world as to his home or abiding-place": <b>will</b>, resolution. For more on this line, please click <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>84. 5. <b>And thus ... thought</b>, and thus over the natural colour of determination there is thrown the pale and sickly tinge of anxious reflection.</p> <p>86. <b>of great pitch and moment</b>, of soaring character and mighty impulse. The folios give <i>pith</i> for <b>pitch</b>, a word we have already had in i. 4. 22, in a different context. With Staunton, I take <b>pitch</b> in the sense of the highest point of a falcon's flight, as in R. II. i. 1. 109, "How high a <i>pitch</i> his resolution soars!" J. C. i. 1. 78, "Will make him fly an ordinary <i>pitch</i>"; but <b>moment</b> seems to me to be used here for 'momentum,' 'impulse,' the sense which the word appears to have in A. C. i. 2. 147, "I have seen her die twenty times upon far poorer <i>moment</i>."</p> <p>87.8. <b>With this ... action</b>, influenced by this consideration, divert their course, turn themselves from the path along which they were going, and no longer can be said to be active.</p>
OPHELIA	<p>Good my lord, 90</p> <p>How does your honour for this many a day?</p>	<p>88. <b>Soft you now!</b> said to himself, 'but let me pause!'</p> <p>89. <b>Nymph</b>, literally bride, was a title given to female deities of lower rank; <b>orisons</b>, prayers; through F. from Lat. <i>orare</i>, to pray.</p>
HAMLET	<p>I humbly thank you; well, well, well.</p>	<p>90. <b>Be all ... remember'd!</b> may you remember to ask pardon for all my sins! - to intercede for me.</p>
OPHELIA	<p>My lord, I have remembrances of yours,</p> <p>That I have longed long to re-deliver;</p> <p>I pray you, now receive them.</p>	<p>91. <b>How does... day?</b> how have you fared for these many days during which I have not seen you? for <b>many a day</b>, see Abb. § 87.</p> <p>93. <b>remembrances</b>, tokens of love given to ensure being remembered.</p> <p>94. <b>longed long</b>, long been most desirous.</p>
HAMLET	<p>No, not I;</p>	<p>97. <b>you know ... did</b>, you know well enough, if you choose to remember, that you did give them to me, trifles though they may now seem, not worth remembering.</p>

<p>OPHELIA</p>	<p>I never gave you aught.</p> <p>My honour'd lord, you know right well you did;</p> <p>And, with them, words of so sweet breath composed</p> <p>As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,</p> <p>Take these again; for to the noble mind 100</p> <p>Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.</p> <p>There, my lord.</p>	<p>99, 100. <b>their perfume ... again</b>, now that you no longer have kind words to give me, take back the remembrances which those words made so dear to me.</p> <p>100, 1. <b>for to ... unkind</b>, to a mind of any nobility, gifts, however costly, lose all their value when their givers change from what they were when they bestowed them.</p> <p>102. <b>There, my lord</b>, said as she offers to return his gifts.</p> <p>103. <b>honest</b>, virtuous, modest.</p> <p>107, 8 <b>That if ... beauty</b>, that if you be virtuous and fair, your virtue should not allow itself any intercourse with your beauty.</p> <p>109, 10. <b>Could beauty ... honesty?</b> Ophelia, with a woman's wit, inverts the terms of the proposition by asking whether beauty could associate with anything more profitably than with virtue.</p>
<p>HAMLET</p>	<p>Ha, ha! are you honest?</p>	
<p>OPHELIA</p>	<p>My lord?</p>	<p>111. <b>Ay, truly</b>, yes, assuredly it could, so far as the interests of virtue are concerned.</p>
<p>HAMLET</p>	<p>Are you fair?</p>	
<p>OPHELIA</p>	<p>What means your lordship?</p>	<p>113, 4. <b>this was ... proof</b>, this was at one time considered a strange idea, but the present time have shown that it is a mere truism; <b>paradox</b>, literally that which is contrary to (received) opinion.</p>
<p>HAMLET</p>	<p>That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.</p>	<p>117, 8. <b>for virtue ... it</b>, for virtue cannot so graft herself upon human nature but it shall smack of its original depravity; <b>inoculate</b>, Lat. <i>in</i>, in, and <i>oculus</i>, an eye, the technical term for the bud which is grafted on to another tree. Cp. <i>W. T.</i> iv. 4. 92-5.</p>
<p>OPHELIA</p>	<p>Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty? 110</p>	<p>120. <b>I was the more deceived</b>, then my mistake was all the greater.</p>
<p>HAMLET</p>	<p>Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness: this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.</p>	
<p>OPHELIA</p>	<p>Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.</p>	
<p>HAMLET</p>	<p>You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it: I loved you not.</p>	



OPHELIA	I was the more deceived. 120	
HAMLET	<p>Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery.</p> <p>Where's your father? 130</p>	<p>121. <b>why wouldst thou</b>, why should you desire.</p> <p>122. <b>indifferent honest</b>, fairly honourable as men go; <b>indifferent</b>, used adverbially.</p> <p>123. <b>it were better</b>, it would be better.</p> <p>125. <b>at my back</b>, ready to come at my summons, whenever I choose to beckon them; <b>thoughts ... in</b>, thoughts in which to clothe them.</p> <p>127, 8. <b>What should ... heaven?</b> what business have such wretched fellows as myself to be crawling, like noxious reptiles, on earth and aspiring to heaven? <b>arrant</b>, through, utter; "a variant of <i>errant</i>, wandering, vagrant, vagabond, which from its frequent use in such expressions as <i>arrant thief</i>, became an intensive, 'thorough, notorious, downright,' especially from its original associations, with opprobrious names" (Murray, <i>Eng. Dict.</i>). Though generally used in a bad sense, we find it occasionally in a good one, e.g. Ford, <i>The Fancies, Chaste and Noble</i>, iii. 2, "true and <i>arrant</i> ladies"; also Ford, <i>Love's Sacrifice</i>, ii. 2, and Beaumont and Fletcher, <i>The Loyal Subject</i>, iii. 5, and <i>The Little French Lawyer</i>, iv. 4. 4.</p> <p>129. <b>thy ways</b>, see note on i. 3. 135.</p> <p>132. <b>shut upon him</b>, shut against his going out.</p> <p>136, 7. <b>be thou ... calumny</b>, see quotation from <i>W. T.</i> ii. 1. 71-4, on i. 1. 38, above.</p> <p>138. <b>needs</b>, of necessity; the old genitive used adverbially.</p> <p>139. <b>what monsters ... them</b>, an allusion to the old belief that horns grew out of the forehead of men whose wives had been unfaithful to them.</p>
OPHELIA	At home, my lord.	
HAMLET	<p>Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool no where but in's own house. Farewell.</p>	
OPHELIA	O, help him, you sweet heavens!	
HAMLET	<p>If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go,</p>	

	and quickly too. Farewell.	140	
OPHELIA	O heavenly powers, restore him!		142. <b>your paintings</b> , the rouging of the complexion so common among your sex; <b>your</b> , used generally.
HAMLET	I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God  has given you one face, and you make yourselves  another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and  nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness  your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath  made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages:  those that are married already, all but one, shall  live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a  nunnery, go.		144. <b>jig</b> , are given to loose dances; <b>amble</b> , walk with a mincing gait.  144, 5. <b>nick-name God's creatures</b> , are not content with calling God's creatures by their right names, but must invent foolish and ribald ones for them: a, <i>nick-name</i> is an <i>eke-name</i> , a name given to <i>eke</i> out another name, an additional name; <b>creatures</b> , both animate and inanimate, as in <i>K. J.</i> iv. 1. 121, "fire and iron ... <i>creatures</i> of note for mercy-lacking uses." So, Bacon, <i>Essay of Truth</i> , "The first <i>creature</i> of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense"; also <i>Temp.</i> iii. 3. 74; <b>and make ... ignorance</b> , and when charged with immodest behaviour plead ingenuous simplicity as your excuse.  146. <b>I'll no more on 't</b> , I will allow no more of such goings on; <b>on't</b> , of it, sc. your behaviour.  148. <b>one</b> , sc. the king. "This exception would be quite unintelligible to Ophelia, but the audience, who are in on Hamlet's secret, see its purport" (Cl. Pr. Edd.); <b>keep as they are</b> , remain unmarried.  151. <b>The courtier's ... sword</b> , i.e. the eye of the courtier, the tongue of the scholar, the sword of the soldier; Hamlet, according to Ophelia, being endowed with the sprightly look of the courtier, the learning of the scholar, and the skill in arms of the soldier.  152. <b>The expectancy ... state</b> , the hope and chief ornament of the state, thus beautified by him; <b>fair</b> is used proleptically, which was made fair by wearing him (as a rose in a dress, coat, etc.).  153. <b>The glass of fashion</b> , in whom was reflected all that was in the highest fashion, the most perfect good taste; <b>the mould of form</b> , "the model by whom all endeavoured to form themselves" (Johnson).  154. <b>The observed of all observers</b> , he whose conduct and carriage was closely observed by every one as an example to be followed; <b>quite, quite down</b> , now utterly overthrown; cp. iii. 2. 198.  155. <b>deject</b> , dejected, broken-spirited; for the omission of the participial termination, see Abb. § 342.  156. <b>That sucked ... vows</b> , who so greedily drank in his honeyed words of love; Ophelia combines what is sweet to the taste and sweet to the ear.  157. <b>sovereign</b> , the supreme power in the state of man: cp. J. C. ii. 1. 68, "the state of man, Like to a little kingdom, suffers then The nature of an insurrection."  158. <b>Like sweet ... harsh</b> , like bells naturally of a sweet tone, rung in such a way as to be out of tune with each other, and so harsh-sounding. It seems better to follow the folios in placing the comma after <b>tune</b> and not after <b>jangled</b> , as most editors follow Capell in doing.  159, 60. <b>That unmatch'd ... ecstasy</b> , that peerless form and feature of youth in its full bloom now cruelly marred by madness (as a flower in bloom is blasted by a storm); <b>feature</b> is used by Shakespeare for the person in general (and especially of dignified appearance, e.g. <i>R. II.</i> i. 1. 19, <i>Cymb.</i> v. 5. 163, as <i>featureless</i> in Sonn. xi. 10, for 'ugly'), and rarely, if ever, in the restricted modern sense of the particular parts of the face; so that <b>form and feature</b> is almost redundant; <b>woe is me</b> , woe is to me; see Abb. § 230.
[Exit]			
OPHELIA	O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!  The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;  The expectancy and rose of the fair state,  The glass of fashion and the mould of form,  The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!  And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,  That suck'd the honey of his music vows,  Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,  Like sweet bells jangled out of tune, and harsh;  That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth	150	

	<p>Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me,</p> <p>To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!</p>	160	<p>161. <b>To have ... see</b>, that I should have known him as he once was, and should know him as he now is.</p> <p>162. <b>Love! ... tend</b>, you say that love is the cause of his madness! nonsense! the bent of his mind is not in that direction.</p>
[Re-enter KING CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS]			
KING CLAUDIUS	<p>Love! his affections do not that way tend;</p> <p>Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,</p> <p>Was not like madness. There's something in his soul,</p> <p>O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;</p> <p>And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose</p> <p>Will be some danger: which for to prevent,</p> <p>I have in quick determination</p> <p>Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England,</p>		<p>163. <b>though it ... little</b>, though it was somewhat incoherent, unmethodical.</p> <p>164. <b>Was not</b>, for the emphatic double negative, see Abb. § 406.</p> <p>165. <b>on brood</b>, a-brooding; cp. i. 5. 19.</p> <p>166. 7. <b>And I do ... danger</b>, and I suspect that when the outcome of it is seen, we shall find it something dangerous; <b>disclose</b> "is when the young just peeps through the shell.' It is also taken for laying, hatching, or bringing forth young; as 'She disclosed three birds.' R. Holme's <i>Academy of Armory and Blazon</i> ... Cp. also v. 1. 275 [273]" (Steevens).</p> <p>167. <b>which for to prevent</b>, in order to anticipate which; <b>for to</b>, now a vulgarism, occurs, among the undoubted and wholly Shakespearean plays, in W. T. i. 2. 427, A. W. v. 3. 181, and below v. 1. 89.</p> <p>108, 9. <b>I have ... down</b>, I have with prompt determination decided; <b>he shall</b>, sc. be sent, go; the verb of motion omitted, as frequently.</p> <p>170. <b>For the ... tribute</b>, to demand the tribute of money due to us, which they have neglected to pay; cp. <i>Cymb.</i> iii. 1. 8-10.</p>
	<p>For the demand of our neglected tribute</p> <p>Haply the seas and countries different</p> <p>With variable objects shall expel</p> <p>This something-settled matter in his heart,</p> <p>Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus</p> <p>From fashion of himself. What think you on't?</p>	170	<p>171-5. <b>Haply ... himself</b>, possibly the variety of novel sights which in his voyage and travels he will behold will drive out this matter which has to some extent settled in his heart, and which by his brains constantly beating on it, has changed him from his usual self; the grammatical construction is 'the beating of his brains on which'; cp. <i>Cymb.</i> i. 6. 8, "blest be those ... that have their honest wills, which (sc. the having their wills) seasons comfort;" and see Abb. § 337.</p> <p>176. <b>It shall do well</b>, the plan is certain to answer; <b>yet</b>, still (in time), not, notwithstanding what you say.</p> <p>177,8. <b>The origin ... love</b>, a redundancy for 'the origin and commencement are from,' etc., or 'his grief sprung from'; <b>How now, Ophelia!</b> what brings you here?</p>
LORD POLONIUS	<p>It shall do well: but yet do I believe</p> <p>The origin and commencement of his grief</p> <p>Sprung from neglected love. How now, Ophelia!</p> <p>You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said;</p> <p>We heard it all. My lord, do as you please;</p>	180	

But, if you hold it fit, after  
the play

Let his queen mother all  
alone entreat him

To show his grief: let her be  
round with him;

And I'll be placed, so  
please you, in the ear

Of all their conference. If  
she find him not,

To England send him, or  
confine him where

Your wisdom best shall  
think.

KING CLAUDIUS

It shall be so:

Madness in great ones  
must not unwatch'd go.

[*Exeunt*]

181. **if you ... fit**, if you agree with me as to the propriety of doing so.

183. **grief**, some editors prefer the reading of the folios, *griefs*, but we have the singular in 1. 177, and the idea of a burden, which here seems wanted, is better expressed by the singular than the plural; **round**, peremptory, plain spoken; see note on ii. 2. 139.

184, 5. **in the ear ... conference**, where I can hear all that passes between them. Polonius insinuates that from maternal affection the queen may not faithfully report the interview, and also perhaps that his wisdom is necessary to judge of the real meaning of what Hamlet may say with an accuracy that could not be expected of a woman; **find him**, discover his secret; cp. *Lear*. iv. 6. 104, "there I *found* 'em, there I smelt 'em out."

187. **Your wisdom**, you in your wisdom.