

# PARENTS' AND KIDS' GUIDE TO HAMLET



# WELCOME FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

We are so excited to welcome you all back to our parks! We invite you to share in our Hamlet and the timeless themes of the search for truth, the quest for love, the obsessiveness of revenge, to name a few. And why an all female cast? PSIP strives to level the artistic playing field for women and performers who identify as female...."anybody can play anything" is one of the company's tenets. We like to push the envelope and create theatre that is new, fresh and accessible to everyone. Theatre entertains and educates, but also brings people from all walks of life together for a communal experience, and PSIP is (cautiously) overjoyed to be bringing people together again back in our parks.

Our wonderful creative team led by KJ Gilmer brings a Hamlet that is alluring, woke, and daring in the casting and the design choices. May you each enjoy the show, and discover and relish your own truths!

In all things Shakespearean,  
Jennifer Tober  
Founding Artistic Director

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Short link to this guide online: [tiny.cc/Hamlet](https://tiny.cc/Hamlet)



Link to Hamlet Program:

# NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Written between 1599 and 1601, Hamlet is the most produced, loved, and complicated of Shakespeare's play, and is on the bucket lists of many actors and directors. I am fortunate to have this opportunity to take this journey and direct this play. My personal journey with William Shakespeare began in Boston in 1993, when I designed costumes for several Shakespeare productions presented by Lesley University's Oxford Street Players (OSP), founded by Annie Pluto and Lisa "Riz" Risley. Ms. Risley serves as dramaturg for this production.

I was embraced by OSP and slowly became a fan of the Bard. I began to get excited about the text, the characters and the history that Shakespeare brings to life. Fast forward to January 2020, I was approached by Jennifer Tober to direct Hamlet, an all-female version. This was not unheard-of when Sarah Bernhardt leads a number of women who have played the Danish Prince: Frances de la Tour, Maxine Peake, Michelle Terry, Ruth Negga, and Cush Jumbo (Negga and Jumbo being the only women of color in the preceding list).

What does it mean for a woman of color to play "Hamlet"? It means playing a role that was largely off-limits to us regardless of talent. We are in a special place in theatre right now. Theatre is coming back but coming back different. The work that is being produced is embracing difference, change and is becoming more inclusive.

This production of Hamlet is different. I chose to cast two women of color as Hamlet to give the actresses an opportunity to say these beautiful words and perform a role that 20 years ago, may have not been an option outside of an educational situation. The women in this production are strong, bold, resilient and most of all dedicated, talented performers who worked tirelessly to bring this production to life.

We had to edit the script for time, clarity and plot movement. Don't worry, your favorites are there. I purposely let the performers present their characters to allow the audience to experience the richness of the text, the power of voice, and transcendent qualities of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

I thank Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks for being brave and bold, joining the ranks of theatres who are presenting all female Shakespeare, especially Hamlet, to the masses. Enjoy the show!

—KJ Gilmer, Director

# THE STORY

**Animated Online Synopsis:** Ted-Ed provides an animated synopsis/analysis in their online video - [Why should you read Hamlet.](#)

**Spoken version from the BBC:** <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/tragedy-hamlet> (click the triangle in the middle of the page).

**A Stick Figure Hamlet One Page Summary by Good Tickle Brain:**

<https://goodticklebrain.com/home/2020/9/29/a-stick-figure-hamlet-one-page-summary>

**Program synopsis:** A synopsis can also be found in the printed and online versions of our Hamlet Program.

## **The story in brief:**

The king of Denmark is dead, and his brother, Claudius, has taken the throne. Not only is Claudius now the king, but he had also married the old king's wife, Gertrude. The old king's son, Hamlet, is not happy with his new stepfather and refuses to think of him as family. Meanwhile, some guards notice a strange, ghostly figure who looks just like the old king. The ghost tells Hamlet that Claudius killed him in order to be king, and that he wants Hamlet to avenge him.

The first step of Hamlet's plan is to trick everyone into thinking he has gone insane, even his mother and childhood friends. Then Hamlet gets together some actors to perform a special play: a play about a man who killed his brother. Hamlet hopes that seeing this story will make Claudius react in a way that reveals his guilt. The plan works, and Claudius runs out of the theater.

Now Hamlet's scheme is in motion, and he doesn't care who else he hurts in the process. Everyone wonders why Hamlet is acting so strangely, some thinking that he is in love with Ophelia, daughter of the talkative Polonius, others unsure of the cause. Hamlet is mad with his desire for revenge, and no one is safe.



# WORDS, WORDS, WORDS ... AND ACTIONS

There are a lot of words in Hamlet (more than 30,000!), which is Shakespeare's longest play. That's more than twice as many words as are in his shortest play, Comedy of Errors, which has fewer than 15,000. ( You can see the word counts for all of the plays [here](#) at Statista.com, if you are interested. They also have other interesting statistics, such as survival rate of Shakespeare's title characters (26%)). A modern movie version, made by Kenneth Branagh, which famously made no cuts at all to the script, came in at over [four hours](#).

Words, however, are not the only way in which the story is communicated. One way in which Shakespeare gives us information is encoded in the flowers that Ophelia offers to the court. These flowers would have had a meaning to the audience in Shakespeare's time - Rosemary, as Ophelia says, for remembrance. But also rue for regret (and possibly for ending a pregnancy). Here are two sources for further information about the meaning of Ophelia's flowers. "Ophelia's Flowers" from the blog *A Shakespeare Garden*. (<https://bardgarden.blogspot.com/2015/01/ophelias-flowers.html>) and "Ophelia's Flowers" on the wordpress site *Hamlet Dramaturgy*. (<https://hamletdramaturgy.wordpress.com/2013/02/20/ophelias-flowers/>)

Another way in which meaning is conveyed in our production is through the use of gesture. Because of Covid, the actors are staged to stay apart from each other. This means that the usual greetings (such as hugs or claps on the back) won't work. The director worked with the actors to find greetings from each character to the others. As you watch the production, see if you can spot the ways in which the characters greet and take leave of each other from arm bumps to secret (air) handshakes to a nod to the childhood games of Ophelia and Laertes.

Our production also includes both song and dance. The song is in the form of "hocket," a musical form in which the melody and/or rhythm are shared among different voices. The youtube video [Hocket \(musical jigsaw puzzles\)](#) by Adam Neely is a six minute overview of hocket and related techniques, featuring clips from disparate sources including medieval hymn, the acapella group Pentatonix covering Daft Punk, Balinese gamelan, Duke Ellington's Braggin in Brass, and Bangarang by Skrillex. He also suggests a technique for creating your own hocket, using music software.

The process of cutting a script requires decisions as to which sections are essential, and which ones can be left out. One of the interesting things about Shakespeare is the way in

which different directors make these decisions in different ways and for different reasons. If you were re-telling Hamlet - which sections or speeches might you leave out, and why?

Attached to this guide as Appendix A is a children's version as performed by kids' Shakespeare Troupe Falstaff's Fellows, which provides a different view of cuts in order to create a shorter performance. (If you are reading the print version, the Falstaff's Fellow's script can be found online at [tiny.cc/FFHamlet](http://tiny.cc/FFHamlet).)

A fun way to interact with the story is to retell it in a different genre, as a ghost story, or a western, or an episode of the Twilight Zone. James Bundy, who directed Yale Repertory Theatre's 2012 production, says this about Hamlet in the production's pdf teaching materials:

"I think there are a number of reasons Hamlet is a really cool story. In a certain way, it's a ghost story. It's almost like an episode of the Twilight Zone, which is a television show from my childhood. The play fundamentally asks the question: what if you knew the answer to a mystery and you were the only person who knew because a ghost had told you the answer? Then, you had to decide whether to do something evil—like kill someone else—in order to attain justice."

As part of your rewrite, think about some of the issues that different directors have differently, such as whether the Ghost is real? This [segment](#) of PBS's Shakespeare Uncovered briefly discusses the views of the original audience (absolutely the ghost is present) to more modern takes (ghost is a figment of Hamlet's imagination). Other interesting questions to ponder are "did [Gertrude know](#)?" or "did Ophelia drown by accident, intent, or murder?" (You can see our production's answer to the last question in our dance/hocket sequence.)

Some other writing prompts include trying to tell the story in a different format, such as only in tweets, following the example of the Royal Shakespeare Company's [Such Tweet Sorrow](#) project or comic, following the example of Good Tickle Brain's [Stick Figure Hamlet](#). Or try telling the story from a different character's point of view. No one is the villain of his own story -- how do you think Claudius or Gertrude would re-tell the plot of Hamlet? Two brilliant examples of this are Margaret Atwood's four-page "Gertrude Talks Back" from her short fiction collection *Good Bones*, which gives a very different take on Hamlet senior and junior, and Tom Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

# WORD SEARCH

A C C I L M T D F S L G S E C  
T I X J F O Z H C B P U J N M  
Z S L Q H G D B Y K I P H S U  
G K O E M I I T E N L G O O P  
S R I H H R X E O R O J R L R  
X S A N G P F L B A R N A D O  
C E I V G O O M C G E Y T S S  
F T R G E P W A L K E B I U E  
Z R Y U C D F H Q R D O O I N  
N E E U Q C I P L A Y E R D C  
N A D P V E I G A K W Z P U R  
N L D M R G Y R G U H N B A A  
M A R C E L L U S E R U F L N  
L E D U R T R E G O R M G C T  
N R E T S N E D L I U G Y M Z

Barnado

Ghost

Hamlet

Laertes

Osric

Polonius

Claudius

Gravedigger

Horatio

Marcellus

Player

Queen

Gertrude

Guildenstern

King

Ophelia

Player

Rosencrantz

# Hamlet Cast of Characters

GDRTRUEE	_____
HOLEAPI	_____
HELMAT	_____
SONPLOIU	_____
ANRODAB	_____
IGEVGAEGDRR	_____
HRTOOAI	_____
AYRPEL UQENE	_____
TOHSG	_____
LSAUCDUI	_____
ELMAULCRS	_____
RTOSNNRAECZ	_____
LGNUDEESNRTI	_____
SCRIO	_____
LETSREA	_____
PELRYA GKIN	_____

## Hamlet Soliloquy I

O, that this too too \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ would melt  
Thaw and \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ itself into a \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
His \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!  
How weary, \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_, flat and \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ to me all the \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ of this \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_!  
Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ garden,  
That grows to \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_; things \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ and gross in nature  
Possess it \_\_\_(adverb)\_\_\_ . That it should come to this!  
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:  
So \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ a \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_; that was, to this,  
Hyperion to a \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_; so loving to my mother  
That he might not beteem the \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ of heaven  
Visit her \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ too \_\_\_(adverb)\_\_\_ . Heaven and earth!  
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,  
As if increase of \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ had grown  
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month—  
Let me not think on't—\_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_, thy name is woman!—  
A little month, or ere those shoes were \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_  
With which she \_\_\_(verb past tense)\_\_\_ my poor father's \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_,  
Like Niobe, all \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ :—why she, even she—  
O, God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,  
Would have \_\_\_(verb past tense)\_\_\_ longer—married with my uncle,  
My father's brother, but no more like my father  
Than I to \_\_\_(famous name)\_\_\_ : within a month:  
Ere yet the salt of most \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ tears  
Had left the flushing in her galled \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_,  
She married. O, most wicked speed, to \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_  
With such dexterity to \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ sheets!  
It is not nor it cannot \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ to good:  
But break, my \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_; for I must hold my \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ .



## HAMLET Soliloquy II

To \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_, or not to \_\_\_(same verb as previous)\_\_\_?  
That is the question—  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_  
The \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ and \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ of \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ fortune,  
Or to \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ arms against a sea of \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_,  
And, by opposing, end them? To die, to sleep—  
No more—and by a sleep to say we end  
The \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ and the thousand \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ shocks  
That \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ is heir to—'tis a \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_  
\_\_\_(adverb)\_\_\_ to be wished! To \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_, to sleep.  
To sleep, perchance to \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_, there's the rub,  
For in that \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ of death what \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ may come  
When we have shuffled off this \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ coil,  
Must give us pause. There's the respect  
That makes \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ of so \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ life.  
For who would \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ the \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ and \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ of time,  
Th' oppressor's wrong, the \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ man's contumely,  
The \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ of \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_, and the spurns  
That patient merit of th' \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ bodkin? Who would \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ life,  
But that the \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ of something after death,  
The \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ country from whose \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_  
No traveler \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_, puzzles the will  
And makes us rather \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ those \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ we have  
Than \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ of us all,  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ cast of thought,  
And \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ of great \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ and moment  
With this regard their \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ turn awry,  
And \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ the name of action.

## Advice from Polonius

There, my \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ with thee.  
And these few \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ in thy memory  
\_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ thou character. Give thy thoughts no \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_,  
Nor any \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ thought his act.  
Be thou \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ but by no means \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_.  
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
Grapple them unto thy \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ with hoops of \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_,  
But do not dull thy \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ with entertainment  
Of each new-hatched, \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ comrade. Beware  
Of entrance to a \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_, but being in,  
\_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ 't that th' opposèd may beware of thee.  
Give every man thy \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ but few thy \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_.  
Take each man's \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ but reserve thy judgment.  
\_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_ thy \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ as thy purse can buy,  
But not expressed in \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_—rich, not \_\_\_(adjective)\_\_\_,  
For the apparel oft \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ the man,  
Neither a \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ nor a \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ be,  
For loan oft \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ both itself and friend,  
And borrowing \_\_\_(verb)\_\_\_ the edge of husbandry.  
This above all: to thine own \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ be true,  
And it must follow, as the \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_ the \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_,  
Thou canst not then be false to any \_\_\_(noun)\_\_\_.

# FREE ONLINE SCRIPTS AND OTHER RESOURCES

## SCRIPTS

For those interested in help as they read the script in its entirety, Spark Notes provides a free online version of their [side-by-side translation](#) of the script into modern language and a free online [graphic novel](#).

A short Kids' Version from a show produced by kids' troupe Falstaff's Fellows in 2014 is attached here as Appendix A in the online version, and can be found online at: <http://tiny.cc/FFHamlet>

## TEACHING GUIDES:

**The Royal Shakespeare Company** provides free online educational materials about [Hamlet](#) to support their [2016](#) production, their [2010 school tour](#) and their [2008](#) production.

The **Yale Repertory Theatre** provides a [pdf study guide](#) for their 2012 production in their educational program Will Power.

**The Idaho Shakespeare Festival** provides a [pdf study guide](#) for their educational program, Shakespearience.

The British Library provides a [downloadable pdf](#) of materials used for teaching Hamlet.

**The Folger Library** provides sample [teaching modules](#) on their website.

## Word Search Answer:

A C C I L M T D F S L G S E C  
 T I X J F O Z H C B P U J N M  
 Z S L Q H G D B Y K I P H S U  
 G K O E M I I T E N L G O O P  
 S R I H H R X E O R O J R L R  
 X S A N G P F L B A R N A D O  
 C E I V G O O M C G E Y T S S  
 F T R G E P W A L K E B I U E  
 Z R Y U C D F H Q R D O O I N  
 N E E U Q G I P L A Y E R D C  
 N A D P V E I G A K W Z P U R  
 N L D M R G Y P G U H N B A A  
 M A R C E L L U S E R U F L N  
 L E D U R T R E G O R M G C T  
 N R E T S N E D L I U G Y M Z

## Word Scramble Answer

### Hamlet Cast of Characters

GDRTRUEE	<u>GERTRUDE</u>
HOLEAPI	<u>OPHELIA</u>
HELMAT	<u>HAMLET</u>
SONPLOIU	<u>POLONIUS</u>
ANRODAB	<u>BARNADO</u>
IGEVGAEGDRR	<u>GRAVEDIGGER</u>
HRTOOAI	<u>HORATIO</u>
AYRPEL UQENE	<u>PLAYER QUEEN</u>
TOHSG	<u>GHOST</u>
LSAUCDUI	<u>CLAUDIUS</u>
ELMAULCRS	<u>MARCELLUS</u>
RTOSNNRAECZ	<u>ROSENCRANTZ</u>
LGNUDEESNRTI	<u>GUILDENSTERN</u>
SCRIO	<u>OSRIC</u>
LETSREA	<u>LAERTES</u>
PELRYA GKIN	<u>PLAYER KING</u>

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks (PSiP) produces work in the ancestral lands of the Osage, Shawnee, Haudenosaunee and Lenape communities. As places of history and nature, PSiP recognizes the importance of the land and the role of art and cultural institutions in the formation of collective memory.

PSiP honors these traditional Indigenous communities, uplifting their historic, unique, and enduring relationship with this land, which is their ancestral territory. While the past cannot be changed, PSiP continues to show its gratitude for the gifts of nature with ongoing respect, care, and stewardship of the land, each other, and future generations.

Land acknowledgments help recognize indigenous peoples' "resilience and resistance in the face of violent efforts to separate them from their land" (U.S. Dept of Arts & Culture). A land acknowledgment is a simple, powerful way of showing respect, and taking steps toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people's history and culture. Land acknowledgments, like historic sites themselves, are exercises in preservation, reconciliation, and engagement with the past, present, and future.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT RESOURCES

VIBRANT PITTSBURGH HONOR NATIVE LAND: A GUIDE AND CALL TO ACKNOWLEDGMENT  
<http://www.vibrantpittsburgh.org/Module/Resource/DiversityInclusionBestPracticesDetail/HonorNativeLand:AGuideandCalltoAcknowledgment?id=99#gsc.tab=0>

NATIVE LAND DIGITAL Native Land Digital strives to create and foster conversations about the history of colonialism, Indigenous ways of knowing, and settler-Indigenous relations, through educational resources such as our map and Territory Acknowledgement Guide:  
<https://native-land.ca/>





# ABOUT PITTSBURGH SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARKS

Now in its 17th Season, Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks (PSIP) was started in 2005 by Artistic Director Jennifer Tober, a Pittsburgh actress/director who has appeared in *The Queens*, *Macbeth 3*, *Salome*, *The Red Shoes*, and directed several shows for PSIP. Tober was so inspired by the natural amphitheater at the bottom of the sledding hill in Frick Park in Squirrel Hill that she started the company with *As You Like It* in November 2005. The company grew and gained popularity quickly, and now offers FREE theater each autumn in three local parks, which have varied over the years. Currently, the local parks chosen are Frick, Highland Park, North Park, and Schenley Plaza.

Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks' mission is to bring accessible, high quality, free Shakespeare to Pittsburgh citizens and to encourage the enjoyment and preservation of our natural public places and parks.

Bring a blanket, a loved one, and a thermos!