

# Hamlet

## William Shakespeare

### Act 1

- 1 Denmark was surrounded by enemies. The state was in danger and Horatio thought the Ghost had come to warn them of that danger.
- 2 Horatio was now convinced that the Ghost was really Hamlet's dead father and would have an important message for him.
- 3
  - a Hamlet had loved his father and refused to stop mourning his death.
  - b Hamlet was disgusted with his mother because, very soon after her first husband's death, she married Claudius, his brother, and seemed to be deeply in love with him.
  - c Hamlet hated his uncle Claudius because he was now king and had married his sister-in-law, Hamlet's mother. Hamlet did not trust him at all. Maybe Claudius had caused his brother's death.
- 4 They both told her that she should not think of loving Hamlet because he was a prince. He had not been in love with her and she should return his gifts and letters.
- 5 She was sad because she loved Hamlet, but she agreed to obey them.

### Act 2

- 1 Hamlet had gone to see Ophelia. He was only half-dressed and looked very sad. He did not speak, but stared at Ophelia and then went away. Ophelia believed that Hamlet loved her and had gone mad when she rejected him. Polonius thought the same.
- 2 He had sent for them to spy on Hamlet and find out if he was mad or not.
- 3 Hamlet said some very strange things to Polonius, but he was making fun of the old man and the audience knew that. Hamlet also said some strange things to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but he showed them that he knew they were Claudius' spies. Hamlet is upset and unhappy, but not mad in this scene.
- 4 Hamlet asked the players to perform a play about the murder of a king in front of Claudius and the whole court. Then Hamlet and Horatio would watch Claudius and see if he behaved in a guilty way. If he did, that proved that the Ghost had told the truth.

### Act 3

- 1 Hamlet was feeling confused and unhappy. He had so many problems that he was thinking of killing himself. But he feared that death would bring even more problems, so he decided to live. We know all this because Hamlet spoke to the audience in a soliloquy.
- 2 Hamlet was unkind, but for a reason. Being in love with Ophelia, or having feelings for her, made him forget that his main purpose in life was revenge. He did not trust Ophelia and he was right, because she lied to Hamlet about her father. He was not at home, but listening to their conversation.
- 3 He was disgusted and upset because his mother had married again so soon after the death of Hamlet's father. He thought his mother was too old to have fallen in love and hated the idea of Gertrude and Claudius in bed together. Now Ophelia had lied to him too.
- 4 Claudius did not think that Hamlet was mad. He told Polonius that Hamlet was still mourning his father's death and that made him very unhappy. Claudius had decided that Hamlet was a threat to him and should be sent away. He planned to kill the prince, but he did not tell Polonius that. Polonius was sure that Hamlet's actions were because of his rejection by Ophelia. He planned to listen to their conversation, to prove that he was right.
- 5 When he saw the murder of the king in the play he was very frightened. He knew that Hamlet was accusing him of his father's murder. He felt very guilty and refused to watch any more.
- 6 Hamlet thought that Claudius would go to heaven, with all his sins forgiven, if he died when he was praying.
- 7 Hamlet had seen the ghost of his father and spoken to him. Gertrude could not see the Ghost and believed that Hamlet was mad. Hamlet had also spoken to her in a very angry way. Worst of all, he had killed Polonius, who was listening to their conversation.

**Act 4**

- 1 Hamlet would be sent to England, with a letter to the English king. This letter would order the king to kill Hamlet and then Claudius would be safe.
- 2 Fortinbras was fighting over a useless piece of land because it was a question of honour. This reminded Hamlet that his revenge was a question of honour too. He had to act soon.
- 3 She had been sent mad by the death of her father and perhaps by the way Hamlet had rejected her love.
- 4 Laertes wanted revenge for his father's death. He thought that Polonius had been killed by Claudius, or by his order. So Laertes planned to kill Claudius.
- 5 Claudius told Laertes that Hamlet had killed Polonius. Claudius agreed that Laertes should have his revenge. Claudius then promised to help Laertes kill Hamlet.
- 6 The letter told Horatio that Hamlet's ship had been attacked by pirates. Hamlet had been captured, but the pirates had later set him free. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were on their way to England.
- 7 Hamlet and Laertes would have a friendly fight with the whole court watching. But Laertes' sword would have a point. He would kill Hamlet, but everyone would think that it was an accident. Laertes agreed to the plan and said that he would put a deadly poison on his sword too. Hamlet would be sure to die.
- 8 That Ophelia had drowned.

**Act 5**

- 1 So many terrible things had happened and were going to happen. If the audience could laugh, that would be a relief. But the grave-digger did make jokes about death too.
- 2 Both men were trying to prove that their own love for the dead Ophelia was the stronger.
- 3 When they reached England, they gave the king the letter that Hamlet had written and they were both killed. Hamlet believed that they were helping Claudius to kill him. The two men had pretended to be his friends, but had spied on Hamlet. Hamlet was saving himself by having them killed. Perhaps they deserved to die.
- 4 Gertrude was the first to die. She drank some of the poisoned wine that Claudius had prepared for Hamlet. Claudius died when Hamlet stabbed him with the poisoned sword and then made him drink some poisoned wine. Then Laertes died, also from the poisoned sword. Last of all, Hamlet died in the same way as Laertes.
- 5 Horatio. He had wanted to die too, but Hamlet stopped him.
- 6 Prince Fortinbras of Norway.