

Review

Answer these questions about the previous video lecture to check how much you remember.

1. Why does Hamlet use the plural pronoun in his 7th meditation?
 - a) Because he is speaking for Horatio as well.
 - b) Because he is ready to take on his Royal status
 - c) Because he is mimicking Claudius
 - d) Because he is distraught and not thinking.
2. Which picture does John McRae refer to, to illustrate the idea of a man in perfect harmony with himself, having balanced the head, heart and body; the past, present and the future?
 - a) The Allegory of Prudence by Titian
 - b) Vision of a Knight by Raphael
 - c) Queen Elizabeth 1; The Ditchley Portrait by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger.
 - d) The Ambassadors by Hans Holbein
3. What does John McRae state that Hamlet has to face immediately after his philosophical discussion of death whilst examining Yorick’s skull?
 - a) The death of time
 - b) The death of inaction
 - c) The death of a beloved
 - d) The death of himself.

Recall

Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.

4. What does John McRae state that Shakespeare is a master of?
 - a) Making you fall in love with the characters?
 - b) Keeping the audience on the edge of their seats?
 - c) Making you want the play to end?
 - d) Keeping you guessing as to what will happen?
5. What kind of King does McRae claim that Fortinbras will be?
 - a) A humanist one
 - b) A wise one
 - c) A Medieval one
 - d) A radical one
6. What does McRae claim that this play teaches us?
 - a) That we should never trust our friends
 - b) That second marriages are never as good as the first ones
 - c) That madness is not something that should be played with
 - d) That the essential nature of humanity means that we die.

Analysis:

7. Let's look again what John McRae discusses regarding the way that Hamlet deals with the conclusion of his own story.

Re-watch from 1.50 – 3.25 and note down the references to time.

He concludes that Hamlet having stated at the end of Act 5 that 'Time is out of joint. O' cursed spite that ever I was born to set it right,' now has come to a place where time has been put right again and so his job is done and concluded.

The way he deals with the past is not just by killing Claudius and therefore carrying out the revenge that his father has asked for, but also by forgiving Laertes. Laertes is a foil to Hamlet to highlight his characteristics. We often think that Hamlet's inaction is contrasted and highlighted by Laertes immediate action but Laertes is also able to be corrupted and manipulated by Claudius whereas Hamlet remains untainted by Claudius' influence.

The dealing with the future also links to the future as he denies Horatio's desire to follow his friend into death by drinking the rest of the poisoned wine. It is important to Hamlet that his story is reported correctly and with love.

Hamlet also needs to secure the position of Denmark and by proclaiming Fortinbras as the next King is able to maintain the stability of the country. This is a selfless act and one that proves that he was capable of being a good and Royal King.

He concludes by stating that whilst the time had been thrown out of joint by the murder and overthrow of a Royal father, things have now righted and are back the way they should have been.

There is nothing else for Hamlet to achieve and so 'the rest is silence.'

1 Look back through your copy of Hamlet and write down the references to time. They are important to note as the play shows and depicts the progression from a disjointed time to a righted one.

Make a note of who says them and the context that time is given.

This is a useful way to seeing the narrative; through a particular image or motif.

Extension:

Time was an important concept to Elizabethan's but they measured time differently to us. Have a read of this website and then see how this affects your findings regarding time in Hamlet.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/54hKCh1LM71rjfksgdGjH3L/time-will-tells>

Evaluation

8. John McRae states that Fortinbras' Kingship takes Denmark back to the Medieval period in terms of leadership whereas Hamlet would have been a truly Humanist King, something new and different and very post-Renaissance.

The concept of Humanism is something we have seen throughout our study of this play and we have done much study of the Renaissance period and the concepts that changed the world. Shakespeare really did live in exciting time.

However, Humanism would have developed ideas further so we need to read a little more about this concept in order to understand it fully.

Have a look at this page from The Newberry Library in Chicago and read thoroughly the importance to Elizabeth of this concept.

ELIZABETH'S ENGLAND

[Picturing England](#) | [Elizabeth on Tour](#) | [Elizabethan Humanism](#) | [Elizabeth and the Poets](#)

Elizabethan Humanism

Elizabethan education emphasized the humanities, including the study of history, law, ancient and modern languages, and literature. Humanists sought to reform these subjects to reflect more accurately the truth of nature and the wisdom achieved by ancient Greece and Rome. This led to what they believed was a "renaissance," or rebirth, of learning in their time, and caused them to dismiss the intervening centuries as "dark" or "middle" ages.

While the humanist movement began in Italy, it flourished in England under the Tudor monarchs. Elizabeth herself received an outstanding humanist education. During the years of her reign, literacy spread rapidly. Both men and women learned to read and write for practical as well as cultural reasons. Elizabethan education emphasized social behavior and ethics, and learning was increasingly seen as a way to advance in society as well as a basis for social order itself.

[Return to Elizabeth's England](#)

<https://publications.newberry.org/elizabeth/exhibit/elizabethsengland/elizabethanhumanism.html#:~:text=and%20the%20Poets-,Elizabethan%20Humanism,by%20ancient%20Greece%20and%20Rome.>



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The water closet

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Shakespeare's

Machiavelli

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Montaigne

The New World

Travellers' tales

Reading Room

Foyer Library Theater Annex

The humanists



Playwright and humanist, George Gascoigne presents his book to Queen Elizabeth. Reproduced from *Shakespeare's England*.

The wave of relearning, especially of Greek, that we associate with the Renaissance, took some time to reach England; but when it did, it created scholars of distinction. The great Dutch scholar Erasmus* spent some time in England with his friends, Sir Thomas More, John Colet, and others*.

The first humanists wrote in the language of learning -- Latin. The second generation of scholars moved towards a championing of modern languages as appropriate for making knowledge more freely available; one consequence of this change was that many writers felt a need to introduce new words into English.

The early humanists in England were teachers rather than writers, and what they did write was instructive rather than literary. They shared a dream: that learning would make those who ruled rule more justly; more generously.

The dream . . .

Scholars like Roger Ascham, who tutored Queen Elizabeth, and Sir Thomas Elyot, who directed his major work to those in power--*The Book Named the Governour* (1531)-- believed that the ideal ruler would be well educated in Christian literature and the classics, and thus would share the highest virtues of both. Above all, the ruler would be well versed in philosophy, and history (from which many lessons are to be learned); but poetry, music, the visual arts, and dancing were not to be neglected.

In some measure the Tudors fitted the description; whether they were always ideal rulers is another question.

Another important effect of the humanists was their emphasis on the power that individuals had to shape themselves and those around them, most obviously through education. The effect of this belief on the arts was profound, from the introspective poetry of the sonnetteers to the increasing fascination of Renaissance artists in characterization and drama in their portraits.

The end of the humanist dream*?*

An English translation of *The Utopia* is available on line from Bill Uzgalis at Oregon State University.

Further reading on this topic. | How to cite this page

<https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/SLT/ideas/new%20knowledge/humanists.html>

It is easy to see from just these two sources that the concept of Humanism was very important to the period but also, to Elizabeth 1 personally. Her education had been extensive and had been a major focus through her incarceration before becoming monarch.

- 1 Carry out some further research concerning Humanism and Humanist writers of the period and write a paragraph that shows your understanding of how this concept applies to the play Hamlet.
- 2 Because it can be argued that Fortinbras' reign takes us backwards, what comment do you think that Shakespeare is making about the political sphere that this play depicts?

Extension:

Fortinbras is often cut from productions for the sake of time but the omission of him has serious Repercussions for the play.

Write down what you think that the character of Fortinbras brings to the action and how you think the Play functions if the character is omitted at the end. What kind of resolution is the audience left with?

Here are some depictions of Fortinbras as seen in some different productions. Write down what you feel that they have in common and how they might be used to highlight and accentuate the character of Hamlet.



Glossary

Witness - a person who sees an event, typically a crime or accident, take place; have knowledge of (a development) from observation or experience.

Proved - demonstrate the truth or existence of (something) by evidence or argument; demonstrate to be the specified thing by evidence or argument.

Suspense - a state or feeling of excited or anxious uncertainty about what may happen.

Struggle - make forceful or violent efforts to get free of restraint or constriction.

Perfection - the action or process of improving something until it is faultless.

Romantic - of, characterized by, or suggestive of an idealized view of reality.

Corrupted - change or debase by making errors or unintentional alterations.

Universal - relating to or done by all people or things in the world or in a particular group; applicable to all cases.

Concomitant - naturally accompanying or associated; a phenomenon that naturally accompanies or follows something.

Humanity - human beings collectively; the quality of being humane; benevolence.