

**Worksheet 3 – Hamlet – the Most Royal King part 1**

**Review**

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

1. Who is a soliloquy often addressed to?
  - a) The last character on stage
  - b) God
  - c) Himself
  - d) The audience
2. Hamlet has seven soliloquies and seven meditations. What is the difference between these two types of speech?
  - a) Soliloquies are written in blank verse whereas meditations are written in prose.
  - b) Soliloquies are religious whereas meditations are not.
  - c) Soliloquies are spoken when the character is alone on stage whereas a meditation is spoken when there are other people on stage but it is not addressed to them.
  - d) Soliloquies are emotional and meditations are not.
3. Why might Shakespeare's original theatre 'The Globe' lead itself to intimacy between the audience and the actors?
  - a) Some of the audience are standing, called 'groundlings' are able to get much closer to the actors.
  - b) Being lit by candles, it feels warmer.
  - c) The costumes were more lavish and meant that you felt more excited.
  - d) The actors worked harder to involve their audience.

**Recall**

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

4. Which character does John McRae feel recognizes Hamlet's true potential as a King?
  - a) Horatio
  - b) Ophelia
  - c) Fortinbras
  - d) Old Hamlet
5. What other plays does John McRae say also deal with the idea of Kingship and what makes a good King?
  - a) Twelfth Night, The Tempest and Macbeth
  - b) Macbeth, Henry V and King Lear
  - c) Henry IV, Henry V, and Richard II
  - d) King John, A Midsummer Night's Dream and Henry V.
6. Which is the most famous book, written by Machiavelli that speaks about the role of the King and his power?
  - a) The Prince
  - b) The Discourses of Livy
  - c) The Art of War
  - d) The King

*Extension: When was Machiavelli alive and when did he write his most famous work?*

### Analysis

7. John McRae discusses the works of Machiavelli and in particular, the book 'The Prince.' Listen again to the end of the lecture 4.47 onwards. Then read the details below about how the idea of 'playing' in Kingship would have been shocking. Look up the references to other plays by Shakespeare and make notes on the nature of Kingship and how the role of King can be controversial. This will be useful when examining John McRae's claim that Hamlet would make the perfect King. Is being a King to be honest or is there an element of deception permissible?

Machiavelli's work *The Prince* was controversial as it argued the existence of an unnatural public persona being used for political purposes. The idea that a public figure, namely the King could act in a certain way, to increase or gain power.

This concept went directly against the widely held belief of the Divine Right of Kings which states that God had directly chosen his representative on Earth in the figure of the King. The Great Chain of Being outlined the position of all beings on Earth and the Divine Right of Kings claims that the King came highest up, directly below God. See below for a diagram dated from 1579 which shows a lot of detail.



This concept of playing a part when given such power was subversive as it claims that this superiority could be an act and therefore not be a Divine inherent quality.

*The Prince* was written in 1513 but was still widely banned in the late 1590's.

The book is divided up into many different sections that deal with the realms of leadership and behavior expected from royalty. In the section dealing with the Qualities of a Prince, Machiavelli discusses military matters; reputation; generosity versus frugality; cruelty versus mercy; staying true to their word; and avoiding contempt and hatred.

'Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are.'

'The lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten wolves.'  
'Never attempt to win by force what can be won by deception.'  
'A man who is used to acting in one way never changes; he must come to ruin when the times, in changing, no longer are in harmony with his ways.'

Richard II Act 3 scene 3 L 143 – 85 where he enacts the role of King

Richard II Act 5 scene 5 L 31 – 41 his final soliloquy where he likens his life as a piece of theatre.

Henry IV part 1 Act 1 scene 2 L185 – 297 Prince Hal may be renegade but will sort himself out when he becomes King.

Macbeth: Act 4 scene 3; Malcolm talks about the qualities that make a King and explains how he has none of these qualities.

## Evaluation

8. Watch John McRae discussing the effects of the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign again. 3.44 – 4.47 he speaks about the fact that Elizabeth was aging and that her death was expected at any time from the date of the Spanish Armada in 1588. So, during the 1590s there was constant discussion about her death and the problems that any succession would have.

Research the plots and rebellions that he talks about so you get a picture of the world at the time that Hamlet was written.

Here are some websites that might get you started:

<https://www.royal.uk/elizabeth-i>

<https://www.historyhit.com/famous-plots-elizabeth-i/>

Look at the following portraits and make notes as to what image they give of Elizabeth and how this changes to show the uncertainty of the time.



Coronation portrait dated circa 1600 but commemorating the coronation in 1559

<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02070/Queen-Elizabeth-I>



The Ditchley Portrait 1592

<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02079/Queen-Elizabeth-I-The-Ditchley-portrait>



The Armada portrait 1588

<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02077/Queen-Elizabeth-I>



Allegorical painting of Elizabeth I 1610

What does this tell you about the role and position of the monarch?

What can you tell about the anxieties surrounding the succession to the throne that was present in the 1590s?

How does this link with the ideas of honesty that we saw in Machiavelli's *The Prince* and the image of monarchs that we see in *Hamlet*?

## Glossary

- **Delicate** - fine in texture, quality, construction, etc.: *a delicate lace collar*. fragile; easily damaged; frail: *delicate porcelain*; *a delicate child*.
- **Tender** - soft or delicate in substance; not hard or tough:
- **Prince** - an important male member of a royal family, especially a son or grandson of the king or queen:
- **Rebellions** - violent action organized by a group of people who are trying to change the political system in their country:  
*The government has brutally crushed the rebellion.*

Action against those in authority, against the rules, or against normal and accepted ways of behaving:

- **Plots** - a secret plan made by several people to do something that is wrong, harmful, or not legal, especially to do damage to a person or a government:
- **Succession** - a process in which someone automatically takes an official position or job after someone else:
- **Kingship** - being a king:  
*the duties of kingship*
- **Royal** - belonging or connected to a king or queen or a member of their family:
- **Misrepresented** - to describe falsely an idea, opinion, or situation, often in order to get an advantage