

**Worksheet 12 – Two Soliloquies: Claudius and Hamlet**

**Review**

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

1. What does John McRae say that Hamlet loses by killing Polonius?
  - a) His sanity
  - b) His liberty
  - c) Ophelia's love
  - d) The moral high ground
  
2. What does he say is Hamlet's purpose of using hyperbolic supernatural imagery in his 5<sup>th</sup> soliloquy?
  - a) To play the traditional revenger
  - b) To frighten himself
  - c) To frighten his mother
  - d) To call upon the spirits of the underworld
  
3. Why does John McRae dismiss claims that Hamlet and Gertrude's relationship is Oedipal?
  - a) Because it has been said by people that he does not respect.
  - b) Because it would be unnatural to attack her and he states he will not be unnatural.
  - c) Because he loves her in a pure way.
  - d) Because Hamlet is asexual and has no sexual feeling for anyone.

**Recall**

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

4. What does John McRae claim that Gertrude decides after she has talked with Hamlet in Act 3?
  - a) She will go with hamlet to England.
  - b) She will stick with the King she has, Claudius.
  - c) She will refuse to have any more contact with Hamlet.
  - d) She will refuse any contact with men and go to a nunnery.
  
5. What is Claudius prepared to do as well as killing Old Hamlet?
  - a) Humiliate Norway and Fortinbras.
  - b) Turn Gertrude against her son.
  - c) Make Ophelia go mad.
  - d) Happily kill Hamlet as well.
  
6. What does Hamlet realize on seeing Fortinbras and his army prepare to enter into a traditional and futile battle?
  - a) That Fortinbras is the kind of man that he should be.
  - b) The he needs to fight back physically rather than allow himself to be taken to England.
  - c) That his path to revenge is different and new.
  - d) That he needs to raise an army to defeat Claudius.

**Analysis :**

7. Let's look again at Claudius' soliloquy in Act 4 scene 3 Lines 56 – 66 and re-watch John McRae's discussion of the plans that Claudius has for Hamlet. (1.10-3.40)

Look at the patterns of words that are connected with matters of state:

Power

Homage

Sovereign

Process

Letters.

John McRae calls Claudius' language patterns 'bureaucratic'. Look back at the rest of the play to see where else Claudius acts in a business-like way when he is dealing with other nations. He seems to deal with Hamlet in the same way that he deals with threatening outside forces.

Act 1 scene 2 L 1-41

Act 2 scene 2 L58 – 84

Act 3 scene 1 L168 – 174

Annotate the references to business and trade in these sections of your text.

Some have argued that Claudius makes a much wiser King than Hamlet could ever be because of his diplomacy and strength when dealing with other nations.

Write a paragraph arguing if you agree with this statement or not? Use evidence to support your view.

What is there in Hamlet's behavior and actions that show that he would make a good and noble King?

8. Re-read Hamlet's 7<sup>th</sup> soliloquy – his last. Act 4 scene 4 L 31 – 65
- Annotate your edition to show how Hamlet's argument moves from discussing the nature of man and the importance of reason to the obedience of the army and therefore to his own inaction and renewed resolve.
- Write down which qualities he uses to compare with himself unfavorably.
- John McRae discusses this use of the image of the mirror to highlight defects and differences throughout the play. Create a mind map of all the places that the mirror is either referred to or implied and how it is being used.

*Extension:*

*Re-read Polonius speech and note down how often he used the language of business, This happens not only when dealing with state matters but also with his own family.*

*What does this tell you about the way he relates to all those around him and how might this affect the way that his family operate?*

## Evaluation

9. John McRae mentions the madness of Ophelia and her use of natural flowers in her madness. I want you to look at this madness and the language of flowers in more detail.

### Why do you think Ophelia goes mad?



"Before you tumbled me, you promised me to wed."  
Ophelia sings this in Act 4 scene 5. What could this imply? How might this have contributed to her madness?

In the Kenneth Branagh version of the play, it is clear that Hamlet and Ophelia are in a sexual relationship. This was also intimated in the 2021 Young Vic production with Cush Jumbo.

How does this change the way we look at the reasons for Ophelia's madness?

Read Act 4 scene 5 L1 - 72 answering the questions as you go along.

- 1) How does Gertrude's initial refusal to see Ophelia affect how the character is viewed? What does she mean when she says "So full of artless jealousy is guilt, / It spills itself in fearing to be spilt." ? Whose guilt?
- 2) What is the common theme in Ophelia's songs? Why do you think she sings them?
- 3) Look at the song 'Valentine's day'. What could it refer to? Does this song affect your view of Act 3 scene 1?
- 4) How much is Ophelia told about Polonius's death? Can you find evidence that she may have been misled?

Now read L 153 – 195

- 5) Staging of Ophelia's flower distribution has often been done with imaginary flowers. Why do you think this is?
- 6) Look at what the flowers represent and write down why Ophelia chose them for that particular person.  
Ophelia gives fennel, symbol of flattery, to King Claudius. She also gives him columbine for ingratitude and infidelity.  
Rue, for sorrow, she gives to Gertrude; she also offers Gertrude daisy, for springtime and love.  
She says she lost her own violets, which represent sweetness, when her father died.  
To Laertes, she gives rosemary, for remembrance, and pansies, for thought.

7) Laertes is now in much the same position as Hamlet was in at the beginning of the play: he has a father to avenge and a woman to protect. He emerges as a foil for Hamlet. How does his character/actions differ from Hamlet's? Find quotes to support your ideas.

*Extension:*

*Carry out some further research into the language and significance of flowers during Elizabethan times.*

*Try to communicate your emotions to someone by arranging some flowers for them or by drawing your thoughts through flowers.*

## **Glossary**

**Catharsis** – the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions.

**Bureaucratic** – relating to a system of government in which most of the important decisions are taken by state officials rather than by elected representatives; over-concerned with procedure at the expense of efficiency or common sense.

**Diplomatic** – the profession, activity, or skill of managing international relations, typically by a country's representatives abroad; the art of dealing with people in a sensitive and tactful way.

**Scruples** – a feeling of doubt or hesitation with regard to the morality or propriety of a course of action.

**Futility** - pointlessness or uselessness

**Corruptor** - Marked by immorality and perversion; depraved.