



# HAMLET

# HAMLET

For Teachers



THE PLAY GROUP



## Dear Teachers!

The Play Group present what is often considered the greatest English language play ever written - Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. This incredible story of treachery and revenge was Shakespeare's most popular play during his time and has enjoyed unparalleled popularity on stage and in film ever since.

The performance lasts about 60 minutes and is designed for English learners, from primary schools to adults. For younger audiences, the language is simple and accessible. For advanced learners, the actors use idiomatic language, including some original Shakespeare lines. After the show, if there is time and the students wish, we are happy to debate the show with the audience and give them the chance to practice their English by asking questions about the show, the characters, our country, our hobbies - or whatever!



This is version 1.4 of the teachers material. Click on the icon to check for the latest version. We hope you will find these exercises and activities helpful to prepare your students for the show.

After the performance we like to talk to the audience. If you have time, why not help students prepare questions about the story?



## About the play

As the original Hamlet is a long play (in fact, Shakespeare's longest) we needed to reduce it to about 55 minutes. We had to leave out some parts of the story, like Hamlet's journey to England and the characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as well as many minor characters. The basis of the Shakespearean story is maintained - but expect MANY surprises!

## About this material

This material is intended to help you prepare your students for the show, in order to maximise their understanding and enjoyment of English in the theatre, as well as consolidating language learning. There are two parts: Teachers notes and the Students worksheets. We suggest you download one copy of both. Then either print them out or browse on your computer so you can decide which activities are right for your students.

Photocopy pages are marked with the icon.



Look through the activities, to decide which are right for your students.

## Short of time?



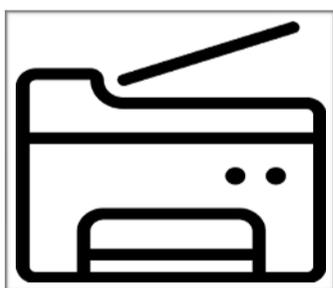
If you don't have much time, why not look at the words the actors will be using during the show (ex. 1) and story summaries (ex. 2 and 3).

Then decide if you have time for any other activities!

## List of exercises

1. Important vocabulary of Hamlet (Now with audio files)
2. Simple summary of the story
3. Advanced summary of the story
4. Picture story
5. Make a ghost (younger learners)
6. The skeleton
7. Characters of the play (GRID)
8. True or False?
9. Towers of destiny
10. A murder story.
11. Mad world.
12. Coming soon: Elizabethan Music and Final Countdown

## 1. Important vocabulary of Hamlet



Photocopy exercise 1 and distribute one each. Often students like to bring them to the show. And there may be questions at the performance!

These are some of the most important words in the show. There are nouns, adverbs and adjectives, and of course: verbs. The answers (though not in order) can be found upside-down in the middle. Several answers are already provided. Students should complete the exercise. If you have time, check pronunciation with your class.

Here you can download a direct link to an audio file (mp3) <http://theplaygroup.eu//warehousing/dp/ham/hamlet-vocabulary.mp3> read by the one of the actors.

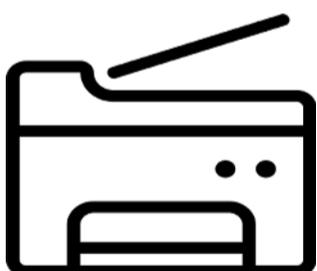
This is the same vocabulary list as you see in the students exercise 1.

1. First ask your class to complete the vocabulary exercise in the students worksheets.
2. Then listen to the pronunciation of the words. There may be some surprises!
3. Then, when and if you feel they are ready, ask them to turn their vocabulary sheets over and try to say the Italian (or German) words after the English pronunciation.

## 2 and 3. Summaries of the story

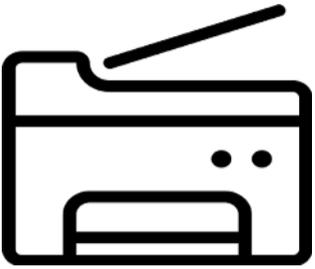
Ask your students if they know the story of Hamlet. There are many versions of the novel: books, comics and of course, movies. Ask your students if they have seen or read any. Read through the summaries with your class either in English or Italian. You might like to ask them questions afterwards.

The two versions provided are simple and more complex versions of the original story. You might like to tell your students that The Play Group's performance will differ in many ways, including some of the characters, but the basis of the story is maintained.



Photocopy the summary which is appropriate for your students.  
One each or one between two - as you like.

## 4. Picture story



Photocopy the picture story.

One each or one between small groups - as you like.

Ask your students to cut out the pictures, then place them facing up on the desk. Tell them you will read the story several times, including the numbers.

The pictures are not in the right order, so students will have to re-order them to follow the story. It helps to remind them of important vocabulary.

Before you begin, give students a few moments to look at the pictures. Then read the text below a number of times. The first time, students should just listen carefully.

The second time, they should place the pictures in the correct chronological order.

The third time you read, check the order of the pictures with your class.

### Text of the picture story

1. Ophelia goes mad. She falls into a river and drowns.
2. Queen Gertrude accidentally drinks some poisoned wine and dies. Hamlet is cut with Laertes' poisoned sword. Laertes is also cut with the same sword. Before he dies, he tells Hamlet that it was King Claudius's idea. Hamlet kills the King and then dies.
3. The actors perform the Ghost's story in front of King Claudius and Queen Gertrude. King Claudius is very shocked.
4. Laertes challenges Hamlet to a duel. Hamlet does not know that King Claudius has put poison on Laertes's sword.
5. King Claudius goes to the church to pray after his shock from seeing the actors perform the murder story. Hamlet wants to kill him but decides to wait for another opportunity.
6. Hamlet is in the cemetery and finds some skulls. He thinks about the lives of the people they once were.
7. On the castle walls, Horatio and Hamlet see the Ghost of the old King. The Ghost tells Hamlet that his brother Uncle Claudius put poison in his ear.
8. Ophelia, Polonius's daughter is so sad and depressed that she goes mad and walks around the castle singing strange songs and giving flowers to people.
9. In the middle of the night Hamlet, visits his mother and discovers a spy hiding behind a curtain. Hamlet thinks it is King Claudius and kills him.

Answers, not to be shown to your students : 1 I), 2 G), 3 H), 4 C), 5 A), 6 B), 7 E), 8 F), 9 D).

## 5. Make a ghost (younger learners)

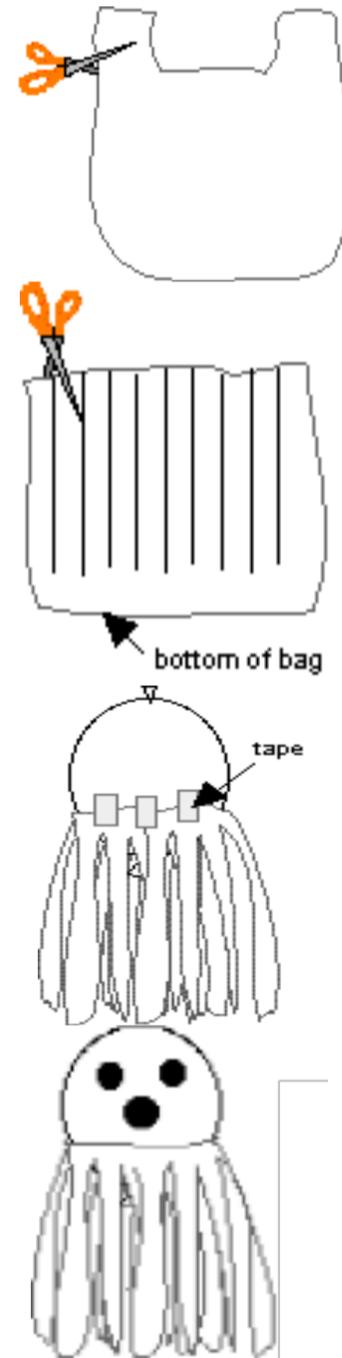
The ghost of Hamlet's father is very important in the story. Young students will love this activity which involves making a ghost from a balloon and two plastic shopping bags. It could also be used as a Halloween decoration or toy. Materials needed: 1 white balloon, scissors, 2 white plastic shopping bags, adhesive tape and a black marker pen.

1. Cut the handles off the white plastic shopping bags. If there are coloured markings or logos on the bags, cut them off too.

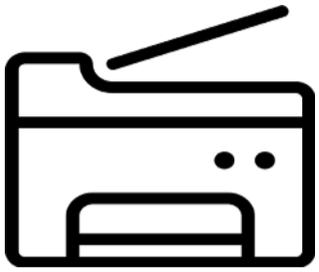
2. Leave the bottom of the bag intact, then cut strips.

3. Inflate a white balloon. Tape the plastic bags around the balloon in a circle. You can also hang the ghost as a decoration.

4. Using a black marker pen, draw the eyes and mouth on the balloon. You now have a great ghost which can fly really well!



## 6. The skeleton

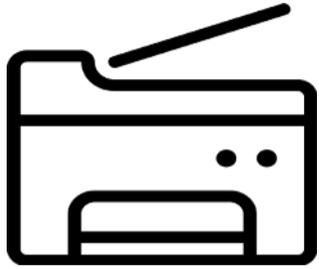


Photocopy the skeleton page

Materials needed: scissors, glue, cardboard, cord, 8 paper fasteners (*fermacampioni*) for each skeleton.

1. Ask your students to glue the photocopy to a piece of cardboard.
2. Then they should cut out the bones. They can attach the legs, arms and hands to the torso to make a skeleton puppet.
3. If they put a cord through his head, skelly can dance!

## 7. Characters of the play (GRID)



Photocopy exercise 6. Distribute one each student or one between 2, so they can help each other. These are some of the main characters in Hamlet. Ask your class to outline the characters in the grid. "Hamlet" is already shown.

CHARACTER LIST: Hamlet, Guildenstern, Rosenkrantz, Ophelia, Claudius, Laertes, Polonius, Horatio, Ghost, Gertrude, Fortinbras, Elsinore

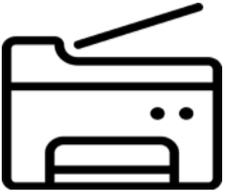
### Solution to the grid

m	o	n	i	g	c	a	m	u	b	e	h	t	n	i
t	i	w	x	u	e	s	e	v	a	o	h	o	t	n
q	e	a	h	i	g	n	o	w	i	p	a	i	w	a
u	s	p	o	l	o	n	i	u	s	h	u	b	e	t
f	e	n	r	d	f	o	x	l	i	e	r	d	i	g
o	f	l	a	e	f	j	p	k	u	l	h	a	p	e
r	o	a	p	n	s	f	o	n	r	i	s	c	e	r
t	i	e	y	s	q	w	r	e	h	a	m	l	e	t
i	f	r	u	t	f	t	g	h	o	s	t	a		r
n	d	t	s	e	a	p	o	i	r	f	y	u	t	u
b	z	e	x	r	c	v	b	n	a	m	w	d	e	d
r	o	s	e	n	k	r	a	n	t	z	q	i	r	e
a	s	d	f	g	h	f	k	l	i	k	l	u	n	a
s	e	r	t	e	l	s	i	n	o	r	e	s	o	p

### About the characters.

Shakespeare's Hamlet is a very complicated story, with many characters and sub-plots. During a 60-minute performance, it is very difficult to present some of these characters! Ask the students which ones they think are the most important, and which ones might not be seen in the show. (Hint: For example, Rosenkrantz...)

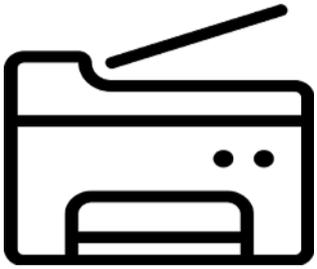
## 8. True or False



Photocopy the exercise or write the following sentences on your LIM / whiteboard. Tell your students that some of the following statements are true and others are false. Ask them to decide.

TRUE...	OR FALSE?
Hamlet is not a popular play.	FALSE. It is very popular... one of the worlds most frequently performed tragedies!
Claudius is Hamlet's son.	FALSE. Claudius is Hamlet's Uncle.
Shakespeare was not only a writer but also an actor.	TRUE. Shakespeare was very versatile.
At the end of Hamlet, all these people are dead: Hamlet, Queen Gertrude, Laertes, Ophelia, King Claudius.	TRUE!
During Shakespeare's time, women were not allowed to act on the stage.	TRUE. It was not until post Elizabethan times that women were allowed to become actresses
In the play, Hamlet is 22 years old.	FALSE. Most sources believe Hamlet should be around 30 years old.
The story of Hamlet takes place in Sweden.	FALSE. Castle Elsinore is in Denmark.
Most theatre performances of Hamlet use 25 litres of stage blood.	MAYBE. With so many deaths, a lot of theatrical blood is necessary!

## 9. Towers of destiny



Photocopy the tower image or show it on your LIM / whiteboard. Give students one copy between 2 or 3.

Here students learn or are reminded of the vocabulary for the different ways the characters die during the play. (Hamlet is very bloodthirsty!). We have done the first one for you (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who were executed when they arrived in England).

Of course nobody was killed by lightning and only Horatio, who survived the final scene, died of old age!

If your students have studied the simple past then they could construct sentences like "Hamlet was killed by....." This is also useful to teach the use of "the" with countables ("killed by the executioner") and the lack of it with uncountable nouns e.g. "killed by lightning".

Answers: Picture 1, death B, 2 -A, C (ie King Claudius was stabbed and poisoned), 3-D, 4-A, C, 5-C, 6-A, 7-C, 8-G

## 10. A murder story

(No photocopy)

This activity helps simple writing skills and relates to a murder. You need a few simple objects (see below) and students will need paper and a pen.

**BEFORE:** Place six or seven objects (e.g. a coin, a used bus ticket, a wig, a photograph or portrait, a knife,, sunglasses) on a table. Cover these objects with a cloth so students do not yet see them.

Then tell the class that a murder has taken place and the police have found some clues. The students (in pairs or max 3) should imagine they are detectives and you can now invite them in small groups to examine the objects. Like proper detectives, students should not touch anything. Tell them to make a note of every object. Help them with vocabulary if they need it. Then ask them to leave the scene of the crime and must - in pairs - write a plausible crime or murder story in which ALL the objects are mentioned.

When each team has finished their story, invite them to share their stories with each other or the class as a whole.

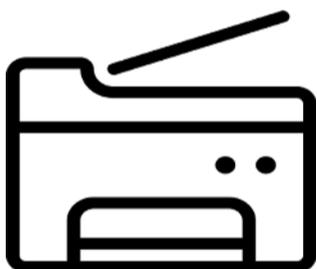
## 11. Mad world...

One of the prominent themes in the play is madness... Ophelia and Hamlet both suffer greatly. This gives students the chance to enjoy a great song and consider the crucial issue of mental health - very contemporary and very important!

Introduce your students to these popular ways of expressing madness in English. Why is it that the English language has so many ways to describe madness? Are the English more mad than any other nation? (Remember: Hamlet is located in Denmark!)

MAD: bananas, scatty, nutty, nuts, crazy, wacko, off your rocker, loolaa, off your head, barmy, loopy, lunatic, raving, bonkers, crackers, batty, wacky, cuckoo, loco, unsound mind, screwball, around the bend, screw loose...

What words or expressions are there in Italian or German?



Make groups of 2 or 3. Photocopy the full text for the song or display on your LIM / whiteboard (next page) plus the Gapfill text (following page) .

1. Read the full text of the song (next page) with your class. Then play the song. Links below!

ORIGINAL SONG: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1ZvPSPxLxCg>

FAMOUS COVER VERSION: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4N3N1MlvVc4>

2. Either... Switch off your LIM / whiteboard OR Tell your class to turn the lyric sheet over.

3. Play the song again and listen to the song.

4. Now give them photocopies (or display on your LIM / whiteboard) the Gap-fill version of the song (following page). Students should fill in the missing words.

5. Discuss with your class the theme of madness. Is life more difficult today than it was in Shakespeare's time? Are some countries more affected by these issues? Why is society generally so unkind to such illnesses? What can be done to assist sufferers?

## MAD WORLD by Tears for Fears - FULL TEXT

All around me are familiar faces  
Worn out places, worn out faces  
Bright and early for the daily races  
Going nowhere, going nowhere  
Their tears are filling up their glasses  
No expression, no expression  
Hide my head I wanna drown my sorrow  
No tomorrow, no tomorrow

[**Chorus**] : And I find it kind of funny, I find it kind of sad  
The dreams in which I'm dying are the best I've ever had  
I find it hard to tell you, `cause I find it hard to take  
When people run in circles, it's a very very  
Mad world  
Mad world  
Mad world  
Mad world

Children waiting for the day they feel good  
Happy birthday, happy birthday  
Made to feel the way that every child should  
Sit and listen, sit and listen  
Went to school and I was very nervous  
No one knew me, no one knew me  
Hello teacher tell me what's my lesson  
Look right through me, look right through me

[**Chorus**] x 2

--	--

## MAD WORLD by Tears for Fears - GAPFILL

All around me are \_\_\_\_\_ faces  
 Worn out \_\_\_\_\_, worn out faces  
 Bright and early for the \_\_\_\_\_ races  
 \_\_\_\_\_ nowhere, going nowhere  
 Their tears are filling up their \_\_\_\_\_  
 No \_\_\_\_\_, no expression  
 Hide my head I wanna drown my \_\_\_\_\_  
 No \_\_\_\_\_, no tomorrow

[**Chorus**] : And I find it kind of \_\_\_\_\_, I find it kind of sad  
 The dreams in which I'm dying are the best I've ever had  
 I find it hard to tell you, `cause I find it hard to take  
 When \_\_\_\_\_ run in circles, it's a very very  
 Mad \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mad world  
 Mad world  
 Mad world

\_\_\_\_\_ waiting for the day they feel good  
 Happy \_\_\_\_\_, happy birthday  
 Made to feel the way that every \_\_\_\_\_ should  
 Sit and \_\_\_\_\_, sit and listen  
 Went to school and I was very \_\_\_\_\_  
 No one \_\_\_\_\_ me, no one knew me  
 Hello \_\_\_\_\_ tell me what's my lesson  
 Look right through me, look right through me

[**Chorus**] x 2

## To be continued...

This is version 1.3 of the teachers material and more will be added each day. Please check back on [www.theplaygroup.eu/hamlet](http://www.theplaygroup.eu/hamlet) to see!

## Contacts

For all questions / comments regarding this material or the shows, please contact us:

Simon (+39) 348 3135752

Eddie (+39) 426 0887

email: [actors@theplaygroup.eu](mailto:actors@theplaygroup.eu)

## Booking information

Campania: Lucio Bonaduce tel: 081-239 5653 / [bonaduce@lenuvole.com](mailto:bonaduce@lenuvole.com)

All Italy Laura Pappalettera 02-72003311 / [teatro@lastrolabio.it](mailto:teatro@lastrolabio.it)

Germany The Play Group. Eddie or Simon.