



 Prestwick House

# Activity Pack

## HAMLET

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Pre-Reading**

### **Setting and History**

**Objective:**      Researching the historical setting of the play

#### **Activity**

The characters in *Hamlet* are fictional, but some elements of the play are quite realistic for the time and place in which *Hamlet* is set. Ambition and greed are often associated with monarchies of the past—organizations in which the death of a ruler could mean instant wealth or promotion for others.

Use the library, the Internet, or both to research the setting of *Hamlet*. Begin by searching for the history of Denmark. *Hamlet* and Shakespeare websites will be helpful, as will the history of specific places in the setting. Use the information that you find to fill out the **Setting Chart** on the next page.

Some of the topics on the **Setting Chart** such as “Historical Events” or “Inventions” are more applicable to the timeframe than the location of *Hamlet*. These apply to the entire world during the target period of your research.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Reading****Advertising****Objective:**      Creating a playbill**Activity**

Shakespeare existed long before the present age of mass communication. Playwrights in Shakespeare's era had to rely on word-of-mouth and simple playbills, or flyers, to advertise their productions. Limited printing technology meant that playbills were mostly text and had only one—if any—simple drawing. The playbill usually included the name of the production, the playwright, the time and location of the performance, the names of the actors and characters, and a brief description of the play.

Each group should design a modern playbill for *Hamlet*. The playbill should be no larger than one page, but it should contain enough information to convince someone to see *Hamlet*.

Use any available resources to make the playbills. They can be completely hand drawn, computer generated, or any combination of the two. Remember, the text on the playbill should be eye-catching but readable. Any drawings should be relevant to the play, but dramatic enough to spark someone's interest.

Complete one flyer per group.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act I****Personification****Objective:** Identifying personification**Activity**

Identify ten instances of personification in Act I. Include the location of each example. The first is completed for you.

When you finish, write three of your own personified phrases.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act II****Simile****Objective:** Recognizing a simile**Activity**

Shakespeare's drama often includes the use of simile; however, we might not easily recognize the objects that he uses for comparison due to the evolution of language. In Act I, Scene V, the ghost tells Hamlet that his tale will "Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres." Today, in an equivalent simile, we would probably say that the story will make your eyes jump out of your head.

In Act II, identify six instances of simile. List them on the **Simile Chart** that follows and then interpret them. For each interpretation, try to include a modern simile that carries the same message as the original.

The first example has been completed for you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act III****Alliteration****Objective:** Recognizing alliteration**Activity**

Alliteration may occur in numerous words in succession; however, many cases of alliteration in poetry involve only two successive words, and sometimes there may be a word separating the two alliterative words.

Alliteration is one of several poetic devices that Shakespeare includes in his drama. In Act I, we find “Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye, / Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.”

Read through Act III carefully and identify as many instances of alliteration as you can (at least ten). List each instance and cite the scene in which it appears. When you finish, write ten of your own alliterative phrases.

**Examples:**

- Act I, Scene III                      “primrose path”
- Act I, Scene V                        “With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts”

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act IV****Interviewing****Objective:** Interviewing a main character**Activity**

You are a news-radio host popular for your interviews with people involved in scandals. Your interviewing skills often help to reveal new details to controversial events. You now have the chance to interview Claudius, King of Denmark, on your talk-radio show. It will be an open mike show, and you will be taking calls from listeners.

Before the interview, you will want to research the status of Denmark a little in order to know what types of questions you'll be able to ask.

Remember, you are a talk-radio host. It is your job to pry the most interesting information from your guest so that listeners will continue to support you. Do not be afraid to unearth debatable issues that will draw phone calls. The public is still reeling after the untimely death of King Hamlet, and they now have a limited amount of trust for public officials.

Each group will work together to produce a list of questions to ask Claudius. The first question has been written for you.

1. What was your role in the death of King Hamlet?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act V****Communicating**

**Objectives:**     Writing a speech  
                         Speaking effectively

**Activity**

By the end of *Hamlet*, the entire royal family is dead, along with some others. An event of this magnitude—no longer a secret—would raise hundreds of questions from the public. Fortinbras, the new King of Denmark, would not have an effortless transition to the throne amid public outrage and confusion.

You will be separated into groups, and each group will act as part of Fortinbras' new staff, including chief advisors and speechwriters. Consult the text and each other to come up with the topics that the new King will need to address when he speaks to the people. Have one person list these topics. Using the list, each group should prepare a short speech for the King (no more than three minutes).

While compiling the speech, remember to address the recent tragedy in Denmark. Use the details revealed about Fortinbras to create a personality for him and demonstrate it in his speech. When the speeches are complete, each group should have a volunteer stand up and read the speech to the class.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Acts I – V

Motif

Objective: Identifying motifs

## Activity

*Hamlet* is not a very symbolic play, but it does include several motifs. One example of a motif in *Hamlet* is the recurring reference to stars; for example:

- “Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect, / Being nature’s livery, or fortune’s star” (Act I, Scene IV)
- “Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star” (Act II, Scene II)
- “She’s so conjunctive to my life and soul, / That, as the star moves not but in his sphere, / I could not but by her” (Act IV, Scene VII)

The **Motif Chart** supplies you with *Hamlet* motifs and locations where they can be found in the text. Use the reference to find the occurrence of each motif, and then quote the text in which it occurs. Remember, motifs are recurring, so each one will have more than one reference.

The first motif has been started for you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Wrap-Up****Metaphor**

**Objective:** Recognizing and interpreting metaphors

**Activity**

*Hamlet* contains many instances of metaphors. The **Metaphor Chart** lists eight examples. On the chart, explain the significance or meaning of each of the examples. When you've finished, find four more examples of metaphor and repeat the process. Be sure to list the act and scene where you find your example.

The first metaphor and explanation are completed for you.