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Hamlet

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



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All references come from the Dover Thrift Edition of *Hamlet*, copyright 1992.

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: _____

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 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 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**Creative Writing and Drawing****Objective:** Identifying major themes and events in a drama**Activity**

The old adage, “Don’t judge a book by its cover,” is excellent advice; unfortunately, in modern culture, it is often the cover that first attracts potential customers to a book. *Hamlet* was first published in the early seventeenth century, a time when books hardly required glossy, high-resolution graphics on the front and reviews from several major newspapers on the back in order to sell. Today, there are so many books on store shelves that flashy covers are necessary to seize attention long enough to capture readers’ curiosity.

Imagine that *Hamlet* has just been completed and that you work for Shakespeare’s publisher. In order to catch the eye of consumers, the published play will need an effective jacket. It should command attention and at the same time truthfully portray the content of the play.

In small groups, divide into two teams with the task of producing a cover for *Hamlet*. The illustrators in the groups will draw or compile pictures for the front cover of the book. The cover art must include a depiction of part of the story, as well as the title and the author’s name. The writers in the groups will write a review for the back cover that addresses some of the following questions and statements:

1. What is the most interesting incident in the plot? (Be careful not to give the whole story away.)
2. What are the themes of the play?
3. What does the story teach?
4. Why do you recommend this drama to other students?
5. Why is this a good drama for the classroom?
6. What kind of reader is *Hamlet* suitable for?
7. An explanation of Shakespeare’s style
8. Any relevance to modern times
9. References to the modern love for the supernatural