

HAMLET CHARACTERS

Hamlet:

- Son of the late King Hamlet of Denmark and nephew to the present King.
- Educated in Wittenburg and introduced to us in Act 1, Scene 2
- Hamlet resents his mother for marrying his uncle 2 months after his father's death.
- distrustful of King Claudius
- once he learns his father was murdered he seeks revenge and invents madness
- he rejects Ophelia when he learns she has betrayed him

Horatio:

- school friend to Hamlet and the one person Hamlet truly trusts
- Witnesses King Hamlet's ghost in Act 1
- At the end of the play Horatio wishes to commit suicide but is convinced not to

Claudius:

- the present King of Denmark
- He took Queen Gertrude whom he loves as his queen and wife, much to the consternation of Hamlet who believes his mother has betrayed him and his father's memory by doing so.
- Cautious and suspicious, Claudius has courtiers Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and Hamlet's love interest Ophelia spying on Hamlet for him
- distrustful of Hamlet and his "madness" King Claudius manipulates Laertes into being his puppet.
- King Claudius' plans backfire

Gertrude:

- Queen of Denmark and mother to Hamlet
- She is resented deeply by Hamlet for marrying King Claudius within two months of his father.
- She realizes her wrong when Hamlet scolds her.
- She agrees to no longer share King Claudius' bed, and aids her son by hiding Hamlet's true mental state from King Claudius.

Polonius:

- Lord Chamberlain
- father of Laertes and Ophelia
- dutifully serves King Claudius
- Polonius believes it is his daughter that caused Hamlet to go "mad" with lovesickness.
- Polonius orders Ophelia to keep her distance from Hamlet
- Polonius uses his daughter to get information about Hamlet for the King

Reynaldo:

- Servant to Polonius
- he is instructed to spy on Laertes in Paris

Laertes:

- Polonius' son
- Is held in high esteem for his fencing skills
- Laertes' role in this play is minor until the death of his father Polonius and from then on Laertes emerges as rather more assertive and gets involved

Ophelia:

- the daughter to Polonius
- loved by Hamlet but is dutiful to her father and obeys his orders to ignore Hamlet
- betrays Hamlet's love by spying on him
- descends into madness from the grief of losing her father and later drowns in circumstances that suggest a possible suicide

Fortinbras:

- Prince of Norway
- Son of King Fortinbras who was defeated by King Hamlet
- Young Fortinbras has raised an army to reclaim the lands lost by his father to King Hamlet and Denmark however decides to attack the Polish instead
- displays all the noble honour driven qualities Hamlet wishes he had
- recommended to be the next King of Denmark by Hamlet

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern:

- Courtiers to King Claudius
- both grew up with Hamlet
- King Claudius gets them to spy on Hamlet
- provide comic relief in the play

Voltimand, Cornelius, Osric and a Gentleman:

- Courtiers