

HAMLET English OAC 1

Important Speeches

Act I	sc ii	0-15	
		81-112	seeming and manliness
	sc iii	135-165	Oh that this too too...
		0-31	a prince and love
sc v	62-85	political advice	
	0-120	the plot and themes of play	
		190-end	antic disposition
Act II	sc ii	235-325	Denmark's a prison
		555-end	What a rogue and peasant...
Act III	sc i	30-64	a confession:dramatic irony
		64-99	To be or not to be....
		100-160	rich in themes and images
	sc ii	50-75	Hamlet admires Horatio
		165-235	player king and queen
	sc iii	9-27	the importance of a king
		39-75	confession: themes, images
sc iv	all		
Act IV	sc iii	19-38	philosophy - or madness?
	sc iv	all	How all occasions do...
	sc v	121-163	Laertes' vengeance
	sc vii	120-144	Laertes' vengeance
Act V	sc i	65-205	philosophy: sarcasm gone
	sc ii	0-85	Ham's new perspective
		208-223	a new philosophy
		354-372	Ham's sense of the tragic

Hamlet: Synopsis

Act I

sc i the watch, ghost, exposition
sc ii marriage and funeral; hamlet's family
sc iii polonius' family; advice to siblings
sc iv hamlet meets ghost
sc v the ghost bids revenge

Act II

sc i polonius sends reynaldo to spy
sc ii theories concerning hamlet's madness
 fishmonger scene
 denmark's a prison
 a play rehearsed

Act III

sc i get thee to a nunnery
sc ii mousetrap played
sc iii claudius prays
sc iv confess yourself to heaven; the bedroom scene

Act IV

sc i report of polonius' murder
sc ii where's the body?
sc iii at supper
sc iv how all occasions do inform against me
sc v ophelia's madness; laertes' return
sc vi hamlet's letter to horatio
sc vii claudius/laertes hatch a plot

Act V

sc i graveyard
sc ii duel

Doing Hamlet as a Problem-Solving Exercise

Clearly the play is about the working out of a problem. Students can be shown problem solving method and they can write a paper on "The Problem with Hamlet".

Note that this is a thinking procedure. It is a "schema" for controlled thinking about the play. *It is not a step-by-step procedure for writing a paper, but rather a way of doing the initial search for critical insight.*

When the play has been read, students must do the following:

1. Define Hamlet's problem. This involves consideration of both Hamlet's needs and his goals and what his alternatives are (i.e. showing how he evaluates his own problem?) The first step, then, is *Problem Definition*.

The better the problem definition, the better the thinking/writing will be. "Macbeth's problem is how to become king" is far too general a statement and does not reveal any tension which normally exists in a problem. Far better to say: "Macbeth's problem is how to pursue his ambition and apparent destiny without leaving behind his moral nature and his sense that a proper leader is a good man."

Hamlet's problem is similarly complex. The challenge is to come up with a reasonably simplified statement of that complex problem. Remember that, though we often think of a problem as a conflict between good and evil, they are most often conflicts between two goods (e.g. a high standard of living and a beautiful environment.)

2. The second thing is to place the problem in a context. Pull back from the narrow view of the man alone and consider the problem (as he considers it?) in the larger perspective of human society and mankind's relation to the supernatural (i.e. religious/spiritual contexts).
3. Once a problem definition has been settled on, consider the parts of the problem. What are the sub-issues or sub-problems? How can they be "mapped" or grouped? - ranked?
4. Finally, evaluate solutions. What solutions are considered, where, and with what final result? What ultimate solution is found? With what success?

What evaluations can you reach concerning Hamlet's ability to solve his problem? Concerning Shakespeare's clarity in setting the

problem for dramatic presentation?

Sample Problem Analysis: Macbeth

1. Problem Analysis: Macbeth's problem is how to pursue his ambition and apparent destiny without leaving behind his moral nature and his sense that a proper leader is a good man. The problem changes through the play. At first it is the moral tension over whether to satisfy his ambition with an immoral act; later it becomes a tension between an apparent need to pursue further evil deeds while, inside, there grows an increasing sense of damnation.

2. Context: In the realm of human politics, the problem becomes whether power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely (MaCauley?). Can we have rulers or leaders with conscience and integrity? Can moral arguments ever prevail? On the personal (but universal level) the problem becomes whether one can ever control his/her own destiny. This spills into the religious realm if we state it as a tension between personal free will and the larger concepts of fate or providence or divine will.

3. Sub-Division:

Should the witches be believed?
What should be done about Banquo?
Whether to follow his wife's urgings?
What is his proper duty to the King?
How to deal with his own misgivings/visions/dreams?
How to cope with loss of friends and advisors?
How to wear a false front comfortably?
How to prevent downfall.

4. Solutions:

Let the wife decide.
Go with the witches.
Follow murder with murder in the hopes of an end to it all.
Act, don't think.
Abandon the moral view.

5. Evaluation: This is a lengthy step to model

From the above material it will be possible to organize thoughts for an essay. See "Discoveries in Writing".

The basic source for all this is Rhetoric, Discovery and Change Young, Becker and Pike

Hamlet: Act II

Remembering how Act I ended, you might expect some murder or plotting in this act. Instead, what this act does is to reveal the extent of deceit and pretense and spying in a rotten Kingdom. The act ends with Hamlet saying some pretty harsh things about himself.

Sc.i

1. Write a summary of the action of this scene.
2. Explain the task Polonius has set for Reynaldo. In your explanation, quote the following lines:

Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth
By indirections find directions out

3. What does Ophelia report to her father of a recent meeting between she and Hamlet?

sc ii

The second scene of this act is long and needs to be subdivided for study. I suggest the following sections:

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|--------------|
| A. | The spies arrive | (to line 42) |
| B. | Your noble son is mad | (42-184) |
| C. | Fishmonger scene | (184-238) |
| D. | Denmark's a Prison | (238-339) |
| E. | The Players | (339-end) |

4. Your task is to read A, B, and C in order to keep tabs on what happens. Ask questions of classmates to get action straight. Unresolved matters I'll clear up when I return.

5. Read "D" closely.

6. Translate Hamlet's "What a piece of work is man..." speech. Get three volunteers to read the scene aloud. When they are done, the class is to "direct" them so that when I return I can watch a presentation of this scene. Concentrate on putting in lots of action that is interesting to watch.

7. There is much in "E" that I will need to explain. Leave it, but translate the final soliloquy: "Oh what a rogue and peasant slave am I..." Pay attention to shifts in thought and feeling there. You might also make notes on how this speech is relevant to your motives for reading the play.

The Soliloquies

Oh that this too too sullied flesh...	I-ii-129
O All you host of heaven...	I-v-92
Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I...	II-ii-576
To be or not to be...	III-i-56
'Tis now the very witching time of night...	III-ii-406
Now might I do it pat....	III-iii-73
How all occasions do inform against me...	IV-iv-32

(and)

The readiness is all...

1. Translate the soliloquies
2. Consider the dramatic context. What prompted the speech?
3. These are speeches that reflect most of all the interior of the tragic hero at key points through the play. Does he think clearly? What is the movement of this mind? Is it toward some resolution? Is there growth or change to describe? Is he "mad"?

What themes and images are developed in these key speeches?

Important Quotes from ACT I

Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him
Together with remembrance of ourselves (I-ii-5)

These indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passeth show - (I-ii-88)

'Tis unmanly grief...
...'tis a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd, whose common theme
Is death of fathers... (I-ii-100-110)

'Tis an unweeded garden that grows to seed (I-ii-140)

Frailty thy name is woman! (I-ii-152)

Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral baked meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables. (I-ii-189)

His greatness weighed, his will is not his own,
For he himself is subject to his birth. (I-iii-20)

...Keep you in the rear of your affection,
Out of the shot and danger of desire. (I-iii-37)

It is a custom
More honored in the breach than the observance (I-iv-18)

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark (I-iv-100)

Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge. ((I-v-34)

I find thee apt;
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
Wouldst thou not stir in this. (I-v-37)

The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown. (I-v-45)

Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven, (I-v-99)

Thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain
Unmixed with baser matter. (I-v-109)

There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark
But he's an arrant knave ((I-v-137)

These are but wild and whirling words, my lord (I-v-149)

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. (I-v-191)

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right! (I-v-215)

Quotations: Acts II and III

Selected quotations here, if sorted into groups, would reveal something about a theme, image or character: for example...

polonius' wisdom/role
Hamlet's madness
Action vs contemplation
interior/exterior man

1. Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth;
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlasses and with assays of bias,
By indirections find directions out. (II-i-69)

2. By heaven, it is as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions
As it is common for the younger sort
To lack discretion. (II-i-126)

3. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation. So I call it,
Sith nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. (II-ii-4)

4. Your noble son is mad.
Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad? (II-ii-98)

5. To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of
ten thousand. (II-ii-196)

6. Though this be madness, yet there is method in't (II-ii-221)

7. How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness that often
madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously
be delivered of. (II-ii-225)

8. Why, then 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or

bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison. (II-ii-265)

9. O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a King of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams. (II-ii-270)

10. I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw. (II-ii-387)

11. The spirit that I have seen
May be a devil; and the devil hath power
T'assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirites,
Abuses me to damn me. (II-ii-606)

12. We are oft to blame in this,
'Tis too much proved, that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself. (III-i-52)

13. The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that help it
Than is my deed to my most painted word.
O heavy burden! (III-i-59)

14. ...the dread of something after death -
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns - puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of. (III-1-86)

15. ...the power of beauty will sooner transform honest from what
it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into
his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives
it proof. I did love you once. (III-i-121)

16. God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another.
You jug, you amble, and you lisp...Go to, I'll no more on't! it
hath made me mad. (III-1-155)

17. Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh. (III-i-167)

18. ...blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please....
Give me that man
that is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core...as I do thee. (III-ii-69)

19. A second time I kill my husband dead
When second husband kisses me in bed.

20. I do believe you think what now you speak;
But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory. (III-ii-194)

21. O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand
pound!
Dids't perceive? (III-ii-298)

22. Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? You do surely
bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your
friend. (III-ii-345)

23. Never alone
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan. (III-iii-23)

24. Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;
And now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven
And so am I revenged. That would be scanned. (III-iii-76)

25. My words fly up, my thoughts remain below;
Words without thoughts never to heaven go. (III-iii-100)

26. Come, come, and sit you down...
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you. (III-iv-21)

27. O Hamlet, speak no more!
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct (III-iv-99)

28. Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;
And do not spread the compost on the weeds
To make them ranker. (III-iv-170)

29. Make you to ravel all this matter out,
That I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know (III-iv-207)

The Stories of Hamlet (Studying Plot as key to meaning)

Plot	Central Character
1. The revenge story	Hamlet
2. The love story	Ophelia/Hamlet
3. The murder story	Claudius
4. The war story	Fortinbras

The *shape* of a story conveys its meaning. That is, when we describe the shape of action, we are making a decision about the significance, the meaning of events. A critical decision in this is the matter of central crisis or climax. On occasion there may seem to be two events that can compete for central place in a story. The evaluation of these, and the decision as to which one is central, brings a reader to a firm sense of what the story has meant.

The traditional "shape" of a story is this:

- a) an inciting action begins the conflict or problem (e.g. Macbeth's meeting with witches)
- b) subsequent actions complicate the story, deeping its central meaning and creating small crises
- c) a central event or climax marks beginning of a significant change
- d) matters are resolved in some fashion

Themes in Hamlet (and their related images)

1. Reason vs. Passion: Does Hamlet ever resolve the conflict he feels between thinking and acting?

2. Deception: ("seeming")

How are we to take Hamlet's deceptions compared to others in the play?

Act II is the most intense. Hamlet conceals himself in language and action, while revealing the sins of others. Yet the result of this is only his isolation.

The theme connects with drama as a metaphor; with Hamlet's interest in theatre as an act of discovery, as a conveyor of truth.

Act III is full of revelations: of uncoverings: of pretences revealed; of insides turned out

By act IV few secrets are left.

3. Oppositions ("heaven/Hell")

innocence/experience
virtue/evil
life/death
soul spirit/body
heaven/earth

4. Man vs Beast

What ideas of manliness concern Hamlet as he moves toward adulthood and a crown? What is a man? what is a prince? Who might have knowledge or be a model?

Polonius as he advises?
Laertes as he acts?
Claudius as he admonishes Hamlet's grief?
Horatio?
Fortinbras as a acts as prince and agent of revenge?
Osiric

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

5. Action vs Contemplation

For a young man or prince, which is to be more valued?
What is nobler?
Can there be a philosopher king?
Are things as we perceive them anyway?
Can we be purposeful in action?

thinking too precisely on the event
for by my fay I cannot reason
nothing is but thinking makes it so
my wit's diseased
my words go up my thoughts remain below
rashly - and praised be rashness for it
the readiness is all
rightly to be great is to find quarrel in a straw
there's a divinity that shapes our ends

6. Reason vs Passion

What is the relative value of the two faculties?
Which is closer to action?
Is Hamlet's state, his measure of feeling and thought, part of his
youthfulness?
How does Horatio model the perfect man in this respect?

Some themes related to adolescence:

Hypocrisy

Developing a vision of the world that is true
Establishing the accomplishments that give a man recognition
Can I follow in my father's footsteps?
Accepting the world as it is instead of as you would have it
Coming to terms with mother.

Hamlet: A Study Sheet

The following are some references to key themes or issues in the play.

1. How does Hamlet evaluate the world in which he lives, thinks and decides his course of action?

I-iv-10-41	II-i-1-80	II-ii-90-115
III-ii-380-389	III-iii-38-75	III-iv
IV-ii-10-22	IV-iv-10-50	V-ii-90-195

2. The problem of the ghost

I-ii-145-160	I-iv-42-61	I-v
III-ii-80-87	III-iv-63-98	

3. Why is Hamlet suicidal?

I-v-99-119	I-ii-135-165	II-ii-309-335
III-i-64-99		

4. Is Hamlet's madness real or feigned, or both?

I-scenes ii and iv		
II-ii-255-281	II-ii-309-325	II-ii-388-9
III-i-150-160	III-ii-330	III-iv

5. Why does Hamlet delay? How does he evaluate his own delay? See the soliloquies.

Oh that this too too sullied flesh...	I-ii-129
O All you host of heaven...	I-v-92
Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I...	II-ii-576
To be or not to be...	III-i-56
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(and)

The readiness is all...

6. Hamlet's problem as a prince.

I-iii-11-55	III-iii-8-27	IV-i-16-21
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IV-iii-1-11

IV-vii-18-26