



Hampstead Stage Company  
a not for profit organization

Shakespeare Presents: HAMLET  
and other Works  
A Study Guide

Created by Amanda Pawlik, Education Director  
Designed and Formatted by Austen Elizabeth Edwards

**The Hampstead Stage Company**  
*Proudly Presents*  
**Shakespeare Presents: Hamlet and Other Works**  
**A Study Guide**

For use with the Theatrical Production by The Hampstead Stage Company  
Created by Amanda Pawlik, Education Director  
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[hampsteadstage.org](http://hampsteadstage.org)  
[info@hampsteadstage.org](mailto:info@hampsteadstage.org) 1 - 800 - 619 - 5302



## Shakespeare Presents: Hamlet and Other Works

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**Education Director's Welcome**

Thank you so much for bringing Hampstead Stage Company to your students!

The following study guide and workshop lesson plans are meant to supplement and enhance our performance. Please note, no formal preparation is required for seeing our shows, but we hope that these educational materials will inspire your students to continue learning about classic literature. We hope you enjoy them just as much as we enjoyed creating them for you!

Sincerely,

*Amanda Pawlik*

Education Director  
Hampstead Stage Company

**About Hampstead Stage Company**

We are a nationally touring children's theatre that brings high quality, professional theatre to schools, libraries, and communities all over the 48 contiguous states (everywhere but Hawaii and Alaska!). The Hampstead Stage Company's goal is to bring great books to life through live theatre; sparking an interest in reading, and creating a new way to use your imagination.

The Hampstead Stage Company got its name from our founders, who came to America from the Hampstead area of London, England to pursue their dreams. Since its inception, our company has grown into one of the largest educational touring companies in the nation. We have performed for over twenty million audience members!

Our interactive educational tours run year-round and are performed by two professional actors, each playing multiple roles. Our scripts are original adaptations, based directly on literary classics, and include



children and adults from the audience. The plays last one hour, with a question and answer session following the performance. We travel to your space, and bring our own realistic sets and costumes; designed using extensive historical research. Our productions are flexible enough to fit into any assembly/performance space.

Theatre performance helps us learn things about ourselves and the world around us. But more than that, by using our imagination we can be proud of who we are, create goals for ourselves, and even help the way we think in school and at home! Sometimes not every school gets to see live theatre—it's thanks to your teachers and parents for bringing cool shows like this to your school! So, make sure to say thank you to them the way we do at the theatre – give them a round of applause!!

The Hampstead Stage Company is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All HSC study guides and supporting lesson plans are available to download for free from our website!

Contact: Anna Robbins, Company Manager: [info@hampsteadstage.org](mailto:info@hampsteadstage.org)  
Website: [www.hampsteadstage.org](http://www.hampsteadstage.org)

### **All About Pantomime**

The Hampstead Stage Company specializes in a special form of theatre called pantomime. Don't be fooled, we are not silent mimes with painted faces!

Pantomime, also known as “panto”, goes back much farther than that. Panto is a form of theatre traditionally found in the United Kingdom, Australia, Zimbabwe, India, and Ireland; and has been performed since the time of Ancient Greece! The word “pantomime” comes from the Greek words pantos, “every, all”; and mimos, “imitator, actor”. Pantomime in Ancient Greece used to mean a group of actors and musicians imitating a story. Many famous poets used to write scripts for these actors, and were paid very well!



Pantomime was first performed in England as a show between the acts of an opera, so they could change the set backstage. It became such a popular performance, that it soon became a show of its own. It is said that pantomime had its first full performance in the early 19th century. Actors travelled from town to town performing well-known stories that taught a lesson, or encouraged the audience to think about the characters, and how they solved the problems they were presented.

Now pantomime is a very well-known form of theatre in England. Shows are based on traditional children's stories, and call for a LOT of audience participation! In England, the audience often "boos" the villain character, "awws" for the damsel in distress, and yells comments to the characters such as: "he's right behind you!", "Oh, yes he is!", or "Oh, no he isn't!". Volunteers are often called on stage by the Hampstead Stage Company to act as the Chorus. They become extras, playing many characters in multiple scenes, and are often on stage as much as the two other actors!

HSC actors follow traditional pantomime casting: girls play boys, boys play girls, and there are many, many costume changes. Actors rely on their voices and physicality (the way they move their bodies) to portray different characters. Just like all pantomime shows before; Hampstead actors travel all over the country, performing in many different types of spaces!



## About the Author

### William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in the central part of England in 1564. He died in 1616, four years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. There are not too many facts known about him as he lived over 400 years ago and many records from this time have been lost. We do know that he was the oldest surviving son of John and Mary Shakespeare. His father began as a leather worker but soon rose through town offices, eventually becoming a town bailiff (similar to a town mayor today). His mother, Mary, came from the prominent Arden family.

In 1582, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, who lived in the neighboring town of Shottery. The couple had three children, oldest daughter Susanna (born 1583) and twins, Judith and Hamnet, (born 1585). His family remained in Stratford-upon-Avon while Shakespeare would travel between home and London. He was drawn to London, the capital city and cultural center of England, for many of the same reasons playwrights and actors today are drawn to New York and Hollywood. London was the only place where Shakespeare could maintain a career in the theatre. And, he did just that. Shakespeare was an actor, playwright, and business partner in the major acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, renamed the King's Men in 1603. His name and popularity grew with time.

People who knew Shakespeare said that he was an honorable gentleman, who loved a good time but who was also quite serious. The plays he wrote—tragedies, histories and comedies—are still performed today and are translated into every language.



## About the Time Period

### The Theatre

The theatre of Shakespeare's day was even more important than it is today. There was no television, no radio, no movies, no iPods, no video games and no electricity. People who wanted entertainment went to the theatre. Not only did Shakespeare write some of the world's greatest dramas, 37 of them, he was also a poet and an actor.

Many theatre's of Shakespeare's time were open air theatres. Perhaps the most famous is **The Globe Theatre**, which was the theatre of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, built in 1599. The theatre burnt down and was rebuilt in 1614. In 1644, the theatre was torn down under Puritan rule. In 1997, a replica of the Globe Theatre as built close to the Globe's original foundation and still hosts many productions today!

### The Geography

The New World was just becoming known in Shakespeare's day. That is why his plays are set in Europe; this was the world that Shakespeare and his audiences knew. Shakespeare lived and wrote in England, so he wrote a great deal about his own country. But he also wrote about other countries too. *Henry V* is about a famous battle between England and France; *Hamlet* is about a Danish prince and is set in Denmark; *Romeo and Juliet* takes place in Italy.

## About Our Play

*Shakespeare Presents: Hamlet and Other Works* is the first in our series on Shakespeare and focuses on the early part of his life and works.

Our production is student-centered. Rather than approaching Shakespeare as one of the world's greatest dramatists of all time that is removed from us in history, Shakespeare himself is presented to the students in an easily recognizable manner.

In our play, Shakespeare is in the early part of his life. He is the typical young man: defiant and procrastinating. Your students will travel along with him on his journey of discovery, coming of age, and responsibility.



We see Shakespeare interacting with his employer Sir Philip Sydney and learn how he came to find a life in the theatre.

While Shakespeare himself is presented through a child's eyes; his dramas are not. The beautiful poetic language, the swish and clanking of swords, and the high drama are all there for your students to enjoy. We hope you will too!

### **The Plays in our Production**

We find that in addition to this study guide, the best companion to our production are the plays themselves. Some great resources for Shakespeare's plays and information on his life may be found here:

[www.shakespeare-online.com](http://www.shakespeare-online.com)

[www.absoluteshakespeare.com](http://www.absoluteshakespeare.com)

[www.folger.edu](http://www.folger.edu)

Following is a brief synopsis of each play presented in *Shakespeare Presents: Hamlet and Other Works*.

**Henry V** is a history that tells how young Prince Hal defeats the overconfident French at the Battle of Agincourt to become the king of both England and France.

**Hamlet** is a tragedy about a young prince, whose father has been murdered by his uncle. His father's ghost calls out to him and calls on Hamlet to avenge his death. But Hamlet doesn't know if the ghost is telling the truth or not, so he sets a trap. And the trap convinces him that the ghost was right. Hamlet knows that he must defeat his evil uncle to avenge his father's wrongful death.

**Romeo and Juliet** is one of Shakespeare's earliest and most famous tragedies. It is a story about a young man and woman who are very much in love but whose families do not approve of their relationship. Romeo and Juliet's families are prejudiced against one another and they will not allow the young lovers to marry because of this hatred.



### Main Characters

**Sir Philip Sydney:** Shakespeare's employer at the theatre.

**Shakespeare:** The playwright himself! Seen in our production as a young man just starting out.

**Shakespeare's Father:** At first, skeptical of Shakespeare's decision to make his life in the theatre.

**Harry (*Henry V*):** A young prince who defeats the French in battle to become king of both England and France.

**Hamlet (*Hamlet*):** Young prince of Denmark, grappling with the loss of his father.

**Ghost (*Hamlet*):** Hamlet's father, recently deceased. Appears to Hamlet to reveal that Hamlet's uncle, Claudius, had murdered him to take the crown.

**Actors:** Played by volunteers from our audience. They present a short play to Claudius to test his reaction and assess his guilt.

**Claudius (*Hamlet*):** Hamlet's uncle. We learn he murdered Hamlet's father for the crown.

**Polonius (*Hamlet*):** Adviser to the Queen, accidentally killed by Hamlet.

**Laertes (*Hamlet*):** Son of Polonius, returns to avenge his father's death

**Horatio (*Hamlet*):** Hamlet's good friend

**Romeo (*Romeo and Juliet*):** Son of the Montague family, in love with Juliet, who comes from a rival family.

**Juliet (*Romeo and Juliet*):** Played by a member of our audience! Daughter of the Capulet family, in love with Romeo, who comes from a rival family.



### Vocabulary

**Tragedy:** In addition to knowing that this means "a sad story with a sad ending", in Shakespeare's day, tragedy also involved the loss of a king or prince and that meant the change of government.

**Playwright:** Someone who writes plays. William Shakespeare was a playwright.

**Pounds:** In this context, we mean English money.

**Apparition:** A ghost.

**Kept the Watch:** Keeping the watch meant guarding the castle at night.

**Adieu:** French for good-bye.

**Slanders:** Lies spoken against someone.

**Malefactions:** Evil deeds.

**Brooding:** A long-faced, feeling-sorry stare.

**Revenge:** Getting even.



### **Shakespeare's Language**

Apart from all else, Shakespeare is perhaps best known for his beautiful sense of language. Here are some examples of his words that have fallen into everyday usage.

#### ***Hamlet***

flaming youth  
in my mind's eye  
the primrose path  
it smells to heaven  
the dog will have his day  
method in his madness  
brevity is the soul of wit  
more matter and less art  
neither a borrower nor a lender be  
the whips and scorns of time

#### ***Romeo and Juliet***

what's in a name?  
the public haunt of men  
a fool's paradise

#### ***Other Shakespearian Plays***

it was Greek to me  
hearts of gold  
tell the truth and shame the devil  
with fear and trembling  
as good luck would have it  
my own flesh and blood  
we are such stuff as dreams are made on  
a dish fit for the gods  
the dogs of war  
the crack of doom  
a sorry sight  
to die by inches  
out of the question  
a spotless reputation



### Preshow Discussion Questions

The following questions provide a guide for getting students excited about seeing the performance and to guide them in watching the show.

*Today we are going to see a performance by Hampstead Stage Company called Shakespeare Presents: Hamlet and Other Works.*

- Does anyone know who William Shakespeare is?
- Has anyone read or seen the plays, *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, or *Romeo and Juliet* or seen a movie adaptation of them?

Let students know:

- **William Shakespeare** is a famous playwright who lived 400 years ago.
- **Hamlet, Henry V, and Romeo and Juliet** are some of his most famous plays -we'll be seeing parts of these plays and learning more about Shakespeare's life during the performance today.
- Shakespeare had a special style of writing that will sound different from the way we talk today -if the language is confusing, see if you can still tell what the story is based on the actors' emotions and staging.

### Post Show Discussion Questions

- Have students share general reactions to the performance
- Who was your favorite character? Why?
- Are there any other questions you have about the play or theatre that the actors did not get to answer?
  - Hampstead Stage loves to receive letters and emails from schools! If they have questions or more comments they would like to share, students are encouraged to write to us! All of our contact information may be found on our website.



## **Workshop Lesson Plans**

We have prepared the following workshop lesson plans for those who wish to expand upon seeing our performance in the classroom. These activities may be done either before or after seeing the performance. Teachers are encouraged to modify as needed for the needs of their students. A summary of the workshops is provided below. The full lesson plans may be downloaded for free from our website.

### **Grades K-2**

For those wishing to bring workshops into their K-2 classrooms, the “Getting to Know William Shakespeare” workshop for grades 3-5 may be adapted for students in grades K-2.

### **Grades 3-5**

**Getting to Know William Shakespeare**→ In this interactive workshop, students are introduced to William Shakespeare, some of his major plays, and his writing style with the intention of giving students greater familiarity with his work to aid in future, more in-depth studies.

### **Grades 6-12**

**Bringing Shakespeare to Life!**→ In this interactive workshop, students learn the basics of Shakespeare’s writing style including how to define and identify iambic pentameter, blank verse, rhymed verse, and prose. Workshop culminates in students bringing to life parts of Shakespeare’s text using choral readings, simple staging, and tableaux.

## **Works Cited and Additional Information**

Many of the activities used in the workshops are inspired by the **Arts Literacy Project**. For more information, please visit their website:

<http://www.artslit.org/handbook.php>