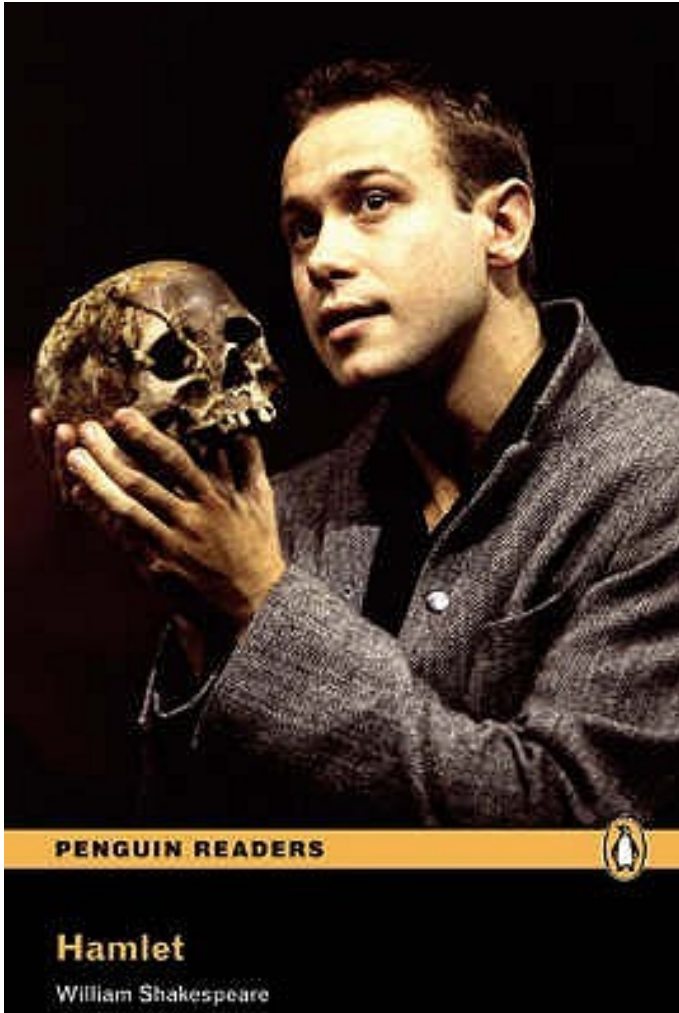


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# William Shakespeare

## Hamlet



Title: Hamlet

Author: William Shakespeare

Format: Paperback

Language: English

Pages: 0

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## Description

Visually engages readers by placing the original dialogue on the left-hand side of the page, and a modern prose interpretations on the right. As a result, it is easy for readers to cross reference as they move through the play and finally "get" Shakespeare.

## Insightful reviews

Jonfaith: **What is a man, if his chief good and market of his time be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more. Sure he that made us with such large discourse, looking before and after, gave us not that capability and god-like reason to fust in us unused.**

en-thrall (?n-thrôl?) tr.v. en-thrallled, en-thrall-ing, en-thralls. 1. To hold spellbound; captivate: The magic show enthralled us.

**pretty good stuff. a bit derivative of dfw, but overall, not bad. interesting to see what this young man does next**[aidan w-m](#)

As Aidan said in his review: Perfect.

My relationship with Hamlet has lasted almost 25 years. I have scratched at the text and chewed certain scenes repeatedly. My mind has bathed in the sublime by performances from Olivier, Brannah, (even) Mel Gibson, Smoktunovsky, Hopkins, Tennant and Hawke. I do look forward to Jude Law's apparent success with the role. There is something eternal in the Bard's tale.

Joe Valdez: To celebrate William Shakespeare on his birthday in April, my plan was to locate a staging of six plays. I'll listen to and watch these on my MacBook, following along to as much of the original text as is incorporated by the production. Later, I'll read the entire play in the modern English version. A good friend I've had since high school recommended this system to me and it's been a very good system for delighting the mind in Shakespeare.

*Hamlet* was entered in the Stationers' Register in 1602, though some scholars believe the bard's play was performed as early as 1599. It may have been preempted by a play based on the Hamlet story by Thomas Kyd and put on in 1594, possibly by The Lord Chamberlain's Men, the acting company of which Shakespeare was a shareholder. Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus told it as a folk story in *History of Denmark*, first published in 1514. Any of these texts might have provided inspiration to Shakespeare.

The staging I chose was the BBC Television Shakespeare production from 1980 starring Derek Jacobi as Hamlet, Claire Bloom as Gertrude, Patrick Stewart as Claudius and Lalla Ward as Ophelia. Though the staging is minimalist, Jacobi is a lion. After completing my reading, I also watched Kenneth Branagh's epic film version from 1996. Shot in 70mm and a visual treat, it features a star studded cast with Branagh as Hamlet, Julie Christie as Gertrude, Derek Jacobi as Claudius and Kate Winslet as Ophelia.

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The following plot description is for the benefit of my own forgetfulness. I can rely on the Internet for accurate plot descriptions no more than I can trust a textbook that's been underlined.

Maniacs are not restricted to the world of Shakespeare, unfortunately, and it seems like some of them provide content to Wikipedia.

At Elsinore in the kingdom of Denmark, it's midnight, and a changing of the guard takes place on the castle walls. The sentry Barnardo is met by Marcellus, who's brought along Horatio, a man of letters come to debunk a report that the ghost of the recently deceased king Hamlet stalks the night. The ghost soon appears, but Horatio is unable to make contact with it. He believes the king's son, Hamlet, prince of Denmark, might have better luck.

In the King of Denmark's Court, a reception is held for the new king, Claudius, who's married Gertrude, Queen of Denmark, wife of his late brother, after a speedy courtship. Their prime minister Polonius is granted permission to release his son Laertes to France, where the lad seeks to sow his wild oats, while a brooding Hamlet is announced as heir to the throne. Neither the King or Queen are able to lift Hamlet out of his black mood, which he confides through soliloquy is based in disbelief that his mother could go from mourning his father to marrying his uncle so effortlessly. Hamlet's friend Horatio enters with the sentries and reports the sighting of Hamlet's dead father.

Laertes departs for France and offers counsel to his young sister Ophelia, who's received amorous overtures from Hamlet which he advises her to steer clear of. Polonius learns of Hamlet's interest in his daughter and commands her not to fall for such vows.

Hamlet accompanies Horatio and Marcellus on their watch. When the ghost of Hamlet's father appears, it beckons the prince to follow it. The ghost reveals that he was in fact poisoned by Hamlet's uncle Claudius, who was infatuated with Gertrude. Dispatched from this world without atoning for his sins, the ghost is doomed to walk the night in a purgatory. He warns his son to avoid poisoning his mind or harming his mother, but to set things right in the state of Denmark.

As Act Two begins, Ophelia runs hysterically to Polonius after being confronted by a mad, disheveled Hamlet offstage. The prime minister is convinced that Hamlet's bizarre behavior is a result of being spurned romantically by his daughter.

Meanwhile, Claudius and Gertrude entreat Hamlet's schoolmates, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (or Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, oft confused), who agree to infiltrate the source of Hamlet's melancholy. Polonius shares his theory with the king and queen that Hamlet is lovesick over Ophelia, but when the men confront the prince, they're treated to displays of inspired lunacy from the brat, who suspects they've been sent to spy on him. Hamlet's spirits are lifted by the arrival of an acting troupe. He marvels at the ability of the thespians to *act*, whereas Hamlet is conflicted with what he should do. Uncertain whether the ghost be good or evil, Hamlet hits upon the idea of commissioning a drama from the actors, in which a villain poisons the king and marries his queen. Hamlet believes his uncle's reaction will reveal the truth.

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I'm not sure whether *Hamlet* is the sort of story anyone can or should remain objective about. It's a sum of so much more than words on a page. I discovered something after I'd watched the play, read it and grasped the plot, then watched Kenneth Branagh's adaptation: I began anticipating scenes. These are scenes that have entered the public consciousness, and I was intellectually curious about how Branagh or his cast would interpret them, seeking out details (in Act Five, Scene 2, is Gertrude aware that the wine is poisoned, or not?) and placing different characters in the lead roles (Ophelia is mouse-like in the Jacobi *Hamlet*, but a force of nature as played by Kate Winslet in the Branagh *Hamlet* and far more haunted).

My favorite is Act Five, Scene 1 between Hamlet and Horatio, featuring the Gravedigger. This scene not only features the most recognized moment in the play -- Hamlet holding the skull of his old friend, the fool Yorick -- but perhaps in drama. Of course, the questions posed by Shakespeare with mastery of language and elemental curiosity remain timeless.

*HAMLET: Do you think Alexander the Great looked like this in the earth?*

*HORATIO: Just the same.*

*HAMLET: And smelled so? Ugh!*

*HORATIO: Exactly, my lord.*

*HAMLET: How we are recycled, Horatio, to perform humble tasks! Isn't it conceivable that the noble dust of Alexander could end up as a stopper for a beer barrel?*

*HORATIO: That's carrying things too far.*

*HAMLET: No, indeed, not one jot. It's a matter of following him step by step, guided by what's probable. Alexander died; Alexander was buried; Alexander returned to dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why shouldn't they stop up a beer barrel with that very loam into which he was converted?*

Of course, in the original text, this sounds much more eloquent, methinks.

One has to raise a glass to *Hamlet* for how many movies and TV series have drawn inspiration from it:

-- In *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (1991), General Chang (Christopher Plummer) compares the crisis confronting his fellow Klingons with that of Hamlet. "To be or not to be, that is the question." He advises Captain Kirk that Kirk hasn't heard *Hamlet* until he's heard it performed in Klingon. The film's subtitle references the play as well.

-- In *To Be or Not To Be*, Ernst Lubitsch's 1942 backstage comedy starring Carole Lombard & Jack Benny and the 1983 remake starring Anne Bancroft & Mel Brooks, Hamlet's famous soliloquy is used as a major plot device.



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Whitney Atkinson: I looooooved the plot of this book. Hamlet was once impressive and sassy and that i enjoyed examining approximately him. It used to be simply very difficult to learn because, obviously, it truly is shakespeare. Had I learn this booklet with no spark notes and my teacher, i wouldn't have understood it.

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Riku Sayuj: unmarried Quote Review:Every personality in Hamlet, if now not crazy, then criminal. ~ Chateaubriand.

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