

# **HAMLET TALK SHOW IN THE AFTERLIFE**

## **LESSON PLAN**

### **BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE**

During the summer holidays students were asked to read HAMLET in abridged edition. Before discussing the story the class was divided into groups and given research work on the Elizabethan stage and the Globe Theatre from the following web site ([http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/enrich/globe\\_picker.html](http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/enrich/globe_picker.html)). The information discovered by each group was shared with the rest of the class (Cooperative learning).

Other two lessons were dedicated to a general overview of the text and characters, asking students to discuss some of the main themes.

### **GROUP WORK**

In groups of four, students were asked to write the monologue of one of the main characters (randomly chosen) at the end of the tragedy, explaining to the other protagonists ( and a general public) their behavior, desires, fears, imagining their feelings, and so on.

Students were given info sheets on the characters containing suggestions and open questions.

### **CLASS PRESENTATION / DISCUSSION**

Randomly , one of the members of the group was chosen to recite/read their monologue, sitting alongside the other characters in front of the class. Fellow characters and members of the public asked questions, or commented on what had been said in talk show style. Characters had to argue and defend their point of view, take responsibility for their actions and in some cases reconcile during the talk show.

### **FOLLOW UP ACTIVITES**

The activities continued by reading and analyzing the *To Be or Not To Be* monologue and discussing the main themes of the play.

[The Globe Theatre Group Work](#)  
[Talk show in the Afterlife](#)  
[Monologues](#)  
[Verifica](#)

# ***THE GLOBE THEATRE AT SHAKESPEARE'S TIME***

**GROUP A** Answers to the following questions at this web site

[http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound\\_globe.swf](http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound_globe.swf)

**1. What type of animals were used on stage?**

**2. Why did Puritans consider the theatre so sinful/immoral?**

**3. What is a soliloquy? Why was it important?**

**What signalled that the play was about to begin?**

**What would the audience do if they didn't like a play?**

**6. What were playbills?**

# *THE GLOBE THEATRE AT SHAKESPEARE'S TIME*

**GROUP B** Answers to the following questions at this web site

[http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound\\_globe.swf](http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound_globe.swf)

**1. What were playbills?**

**2. Who got wet if it rained during a play?**

**How did people behave at the theatre?**

**How would Shakespeare's special effects man create the sound of birds?**

**What was unusual about female characters?**

**6. Who is a Patron; what did he do?**

# *THE GLOBE THEATRE AT SHAKESPEARE'S TIME*

GROUP C Answers to the following questions at this web site

[http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound\\_globe.swf](http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound_globe.swf)

**1. What were the people with the cheapest tickets called? Why?**

**2. Who sat in the galleries?**

**3. Were actors part of high society? What did people think of them?**

**What was a 'cutpurse' and what might happen to them at the theatre?**

**Did all theatre companies own a theatre to perform in?**

**6. What is a soliloquy? Why was it important?**

# *THE GLOBE THEATRE AT SHAKESPEARE'S TIME*

**GROUP D** Answers to the following questions at this web site

[http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound\\_globe.swf](http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound_globe.swf)

**1. How were pickpockets treated if they got caught?**

**2. How did the Globe catch fire?**

**3. What were satirical comedies about?**

**Where did the players get their best costumes from?**

**5. Could you leave the theatre if the play had no finished?**

**6. Why did Puritans consider the theatre so sinful/immoral?**

# *THE GLOBE THEATRE AT SHAKESPEARE'S TIME*

**GROUP E** Answers to the following questions at this web site

[http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound\\_globe.swf](http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound_globe.swf)

**1. Who is a Patron; what did he do?**

**2. Why was Shakespeare so interested in the financial success of the Globe?**

**What sort of people went to the Globe theatre?**

**What sort of scenery did Shakespeare's theatre have?**

**Where did the players get their best costumes from?**

**6. How did the Globe catch fire?**

# *THE GLOBE THEATRE AT SHAKESPEARE'S TIME*

**GROUP F** Answers to the following questions at this web site

[http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound\\_globe.swf](http://aspirations.english.cam.ac.uk/converse/movies/sound_globe.swf)

**What is doubling?**

**2. What could a specific costume or colour tell the public about the character on stage?**

**How many toilets were there at the Globe in Shakespeare's day?**

**How did Shakespeare's company light their plays?**

**What did the area under the stage symbolize when actors shouted from underneath it?**

**6. Why was Shakespeare so interested in the financial success of the Globe?**

## TALK SHOW IN THE AFTERLIFE

6 main characters meet in the afterlife talk show style and discuss their relationships, responsibilities and deep desires. Write her/his monologue.

**Group Work** :After reading the play (abridged version) write her/his monologue. One member of the group will be chosen to recite/read the monologue and then answer questions asked by the public or other characters. Be ready to explain and defend your choices.

**Hamlet** : You pretended to be crazy.

- Ophelia (your girlfriend) - you think all women are betraying whores. You deny loving her.
- Claudius (your uncle) - he murdered your father and married your mother.
- Gertrude (your mother) - doesn't know your father died (poison in his ear)
- Horatio - your only true friend left.
- Polonius (Ophelia's meddling father) - you accidentally kill him.
- Laertes (Ophelia's brother) - you kill each other.

Probe Hamlet's mind. Get inside it and explore every niche and crevice. Then, attempt to explain why he acts as he does. True, his behavior is in large part a reaction to his father's death and his mother's marriage to Claudius. But what else bothers Hamlet? Is he angry because he himself did not succeed to the throne? Does the ghost cause him to dwell morbidly on the afterlife? Does he suddenly hate all women because of what his mother did?

**Gertrude** : You have a close relationship with Hamlet, but you are a bit nervous around him.

- Hamlet Senior (your husband of thirty years) - one month after his death, you married Claudius (his brother).
- Claudius - your current husband of one month.
- Hamlet (your beloved son) who goes crazy for no apparent reason.
- Ophelia - Hamlet's unfortunate girlfriend.
- Polonius - your advisor/Ophelia's father.  
You die by drinking poisoned wine.

Probe her mind. Get inside it. Then, attempt to explain why she acts as she does. How does she react when her husband does? Is she in love with Claudius, did she love her husband? What's her role: mother, queen, wife woman?

**Claudius** You poisoned your brother while he slept, but no one knows about it. You married Gertrude, his widow, after only a month. You think Hamlet suspects what you did, and plots with Laertes (seeking revenge for his father and sister's deaths) to kill Hamlet in a duel. You accidentally kill Gertrude when she drinks poisoned wine that was meant for Hamlet

Probe his mind. Get inside it. Then, attempt to explain why he acts as he does. What does he really want? Would he be a better king/ husband /father than his brother? Who can he trust?

**Ghost of Hamlet Sr.** :You are Hamlet's father. In life, you killed Fortinbras Sr. in battle, which causes Fortinbras to invade Denmark, before you were murdered by your brother, Claudius. You appear first to Horatio and then to Hamlet. You tell Hamlet of your murder and order him to avenge your death, which causes him to feign insanity and sparks the tragedy that follows.

How can you convince your son to revenge you? And what about your wife? Do you still love her? Does she love you? Did she *betray you while you were still alive*?

**Laertes** : You hate Hamlet. Polonius (your father) - Hamlet killed him on 'accident' while he was spying on Hamlet and Gertrude. Ophelia (your sister) - she went crazy after Hamlet rejected her and then killed your father. She drowns herself. Claudius - convinces you to fight Hamlet. You kill each other.

Probe Laertes's mind. Get inside it. Then, attempt to explain why he acts as he does. How does he react towards his father and his sister? Is he angry because he believes he should be prince and not that weakling of Hamlet?



**Ophelia** : You go crazy after Hamlet calls you a whore and tells you he never loved you. Hamlet - your long-time boyfriend. Polonius (your father) - was killed by Hamlet, which adds to your insanity. Laertes - (your brother) who is studying in Paris.

Probe her mind. Get inside it. Then, attempt to explain why she acts as she does. How does she react towards her father / brother? Is she in love with Hamlet , does he love her,? Does anyone truly love/respect her? Why is she so desperate?

## **TALK SHOW IN THE AFTERLIFE**

The 6 main characters of Shakespeare's play HAMLET meet in an the afterlife and take part in a talk show. They discuss their relationships, responsibilities and deep desires.

### **HAMLET**

I am Hamlet and I would like to express my feelings and my thoughts to you. I am particularly thoughtful and before doing something I think a lot on what I have to do. In fact, when the ghost appeared and told me to revenge my father, I waited a lot before making a decision.

Thanks to the ghost, I learnt the truth: my father was poisoned by Claudius, the new king who became my stepfather because he married Gertrude, my mother.

In my opinion, the only aim of my stepfather was to become the king of Denmark, stealing my throne. If I had my revenge immediately I would be killed by Claudius in a cruel way. I had been very afraid and I decided to make Claudius feel guilty.

When the actors performed my story, Claudius was clearly disturbed by the poisoning scene. I was triumphant and after the play I had a fantastic occasion to kill Claudius: when he was praying and repenting. I decided not to kill him because if I had my revenge in that way Claudius would go to heaven and not to hell.

During the play, I sat next to Ophelia who I think is unfaithful like all the women in the world. When I came back to Denmark I discovered that Ophelia had died, falling into the river while she was collecting flowers.

Laertes was very angry with me even if I didn't want to hurt Ophelia. Laertes suggested a just-for-fun swordfight and in that occasion I had my revenge. I killed Laertes and finally I stabbed and poisoned Claudius, then I died because of the poisoned wound Laertes gave me.

In fact, the Laertes' sword was poisoned and, in a few words, he killed himself with his own hands. I think that Laertes has been blinded by hate and his mind has been manipulated by Claudius.

In the end, my mother Gertrude didn't want to accept the truth: her dead husband had been poisoned by Claudius so she has been a victim of her relatives' revenge. She died when she wanted to show affection and love for me. – Sorry mum, you have been the only person that really loved me.-

*Benetton , Pitta, Collautti, Fanton*

## **CLAUDIUS**

My name is Claudius, I'm the brother of the dead King of Denmark, and I want to tell you my story of lies and betrayals.

Since I was a child, I've been jealous of my older brother, because he became the King of Denmark, he married a beautiful woman and he also had a family.

I've always felt inferior to him, and my aim has always been to make him pay for it. That's why I killed the King by pouring poison in his ear while he was sleeping in the garden.

Maybe I'm a bad man, but I would have been certainly a good king, a good husband and good stepfather. Actually I never really loved Gertrude, and Hamlet has always represented a problem for me. I wanted them only because I knew that by doing so I would hurt my brother.

Being a successful King doesn't necessarily mean being a nice person or doing the right thing, but being inventive, charismatic and manipulative; all qualities that I've got.

The only person who really tried to stop me was Hamlet. He had always suspected me, and he tried to revenge his father's murder in many ways.

But in conclusion, I don't regret anything, even if I haven't obtained everything I wanted.

In fact if my plan to kill Hamlet hadn't gone wrong, and if Gertrude hadn't drunk the poisoned wine, now Hamlet would be dead and I would still be King.

Now, that we are face to face, I have to tell each of you a last few things: Gertrude, maybe you are the only one I'm sorry for what I've done to you. I didn't want to hurt you so much.

Hamlet, if now I'm not the King of Denmark it is all your fault.

And brother, I'm proud to have killed you, because I've obtained my revenge.

*Bearzotti, F.Cesare, Fiorillo, Schiavo*

## **GHOST OF HAMLET Sr.**

My story talks about a betrayal. I am the real king of Denmark, murdered by my brother Claudius who immediately usurped my throne marrying my wife Gertrude.

It was midnight when I first showed myself to my sentinels. I didn't waste a word with them, because my aim was to speak with my son. In my second apparition I finally asked Hamlet to revenge me. I thought my mission had ended, but I kept on living in my son's mind. From that moment Hamlet started going crazy and seeing revenge as the only reason for life.

Now I have become Hamlets' alter-ego, I torment his thoughts, actions and push him to do unreasonable things. I could seem selfish because by wanting this revenge I turned him into a murderer, but in reality it can be understandable because everyone who loses his point of reference is also blinded by rage.

Now it's your turn to judge if the reason of this tragedy is my fault or my son's fault. However at the end of this sad story I feel a little guilty for all of these victims caused by my thirst of revenge. If I could go back to the past I would do everything again just as I have done, because my soul can't be free without revenge.

*Califano, Driutti, Mansutti, Tomasino*

## **OPHELIA**

My name is Ophelia. I'm Polonius's daughter and I'm 16 years old. I lived in Elsinore Castle with my father and Laertes, my jealous brother. I was in love with Hamlet, I thought.

Hamlet was my boyfriend and I thought that he really loved me, but his behaviour showed me that he didn't care less about me. I was very young and naive to decide for myself, so other people decided for me. Hamlet, for example, had control of me and my body, he insisted and I had to give myself to make Hamlet satisfied, so my brother and my father told me that I should fear intimacy with Hamlet.

But my father and my brother wanted me to be indifferent towards him only for political reasons, in fact the King wanted me to spy on Hamlet to understand if he is really going crazy.

This indifference made Hamlet very nervous, in fact he started to offend me, call me a prostitute, he said he didn't love me and for this I was hurt very deeply. I was very confused but in the end I understood that I have never been and I would have never been free.

So, I decided to commit suicide in this way, with flowers and singing a beautiful song, living at least this moment with awareness and in peace, because I loved, but nobody loved me.

*Grion, Nocent, P.Cesare, Zoto*

## **LAERTES**

My name is Laertes, a young Danish Lord, son of Polonius and the brother of Ophelia. I spent most of my time at college in France, but when I heard about my father's death, I returned secretly from France and wanted to know the truth about my father. Not only, but I was very upset at the sight of my sister Ophelia who was shocked by our father's death and I think she went mad!

I asked the King, Claudius some information about what had happened and he told me that Hamlet had killed my father so we organized a trap for him. It was a fencing match between Hamlet and myself and my sword had a poisoned blade. What's more, Claudius prepared some poisoned wine for Hamlet. Then, the Queen came in and told me that Ophelia had died. When I was at Ophelia's funeral, suddenly Hamlet arrived, we fought, but Oratio took Hamlet away. I really hate Hamlet! How could he think of loving Ophelia more than me?

The King organized a challenge between Hamlet and myself in front of the whole court. Before the fight, Hamlet gave me his apologies for killing my father. I accepted them, but I insisted on playing out the match as a way to restore my honour in the eyes of the world. I was only able to scratch Hamlet with the poisoned sword and the poison started to flow in Hamlet's veins. Then, we exchanged swords and Hamlet wounded me. We were both poisoned and we died. How stupid I was, but my sister was dead and my father too, it was a shock, because my sister was all my life, she was the only reason for living!

Now I'm in the Afterlife and I can meet my lovely sister again. At the beginning I hated Hamlet, but when I discovered that Claudius had such a cruel aim to become the new King, I apologize to him (Hamlet).

*Cusmà, Billiani, Russo, Magrino*

## **GERTRUDE**

I'm Gertrude, and Hamlet is my son.

I'm the queen of Denmark and I will explain my complicated story.

When Hamlet's father, king of Denmark died, I was very upset, desperate and I didn't know anymore who I really was.

So, while every evening I was crying in my bedroom, Claudius, Hamlet's uncle, comforted me in a very special way as nobody had ever done in my life. I felt protected and understood.

So after a few days I fell in love with him, and a month later we got married. Maybe the reason of this choice was my desperation, but I realized my mistake too late.

After marrying him, I hoped that my son would get along with Claudius, and consider him not just an uncle but a second father and also that Claudius would learn to love Hamlet like his own son.

But this was only an illusion.

In fact Hamlet came to my bedroom and he told me the truth: he wanted to seem mad so he could kill Claudius, the king's murderer more easily.

I was scared by Hamlet's cruel words and violent reactions, and I cried for help.

He accused me of a great sin: marrying my husband's brother just a few weeks after my husband's death.

He shocked me, but also helped me admit the guilty feelings I had tried to suppress up to now.

When he said that the ghost of my old husband was with us in the bedroom I felt even guiltier and the love for him came back to me as vivid as before.

Finally, I have to say that I feel so sorry and so guilty for the things I've done. I realized too late that I didn't love Claudius like the way I had loved Hamlet's father.

*Della Mora, Bottos, Stoian ,Janscak.*

## ENGLISH TEST

Name:..... Class:.....Date:.....

### ANSWER AT LEAST FOUR OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1. Explain, in your own words, the following verses from *Hamlet*. What language/ images is used to describe death? Why is Hamlet so desperate?

To die, to sleep.

To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub,

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,

Must give us pause. There's the respect

That makes calamity of so long life.

To die, to sleep—to sleep, maybe to dream. Ah, but there's the catch: in death's sleep who knows what kind of dreams might come, after we've put the noise and commotion of life behind us.

That's certainly something to worry about. That's the consideration that makes us stretch out our sufferings so long.



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