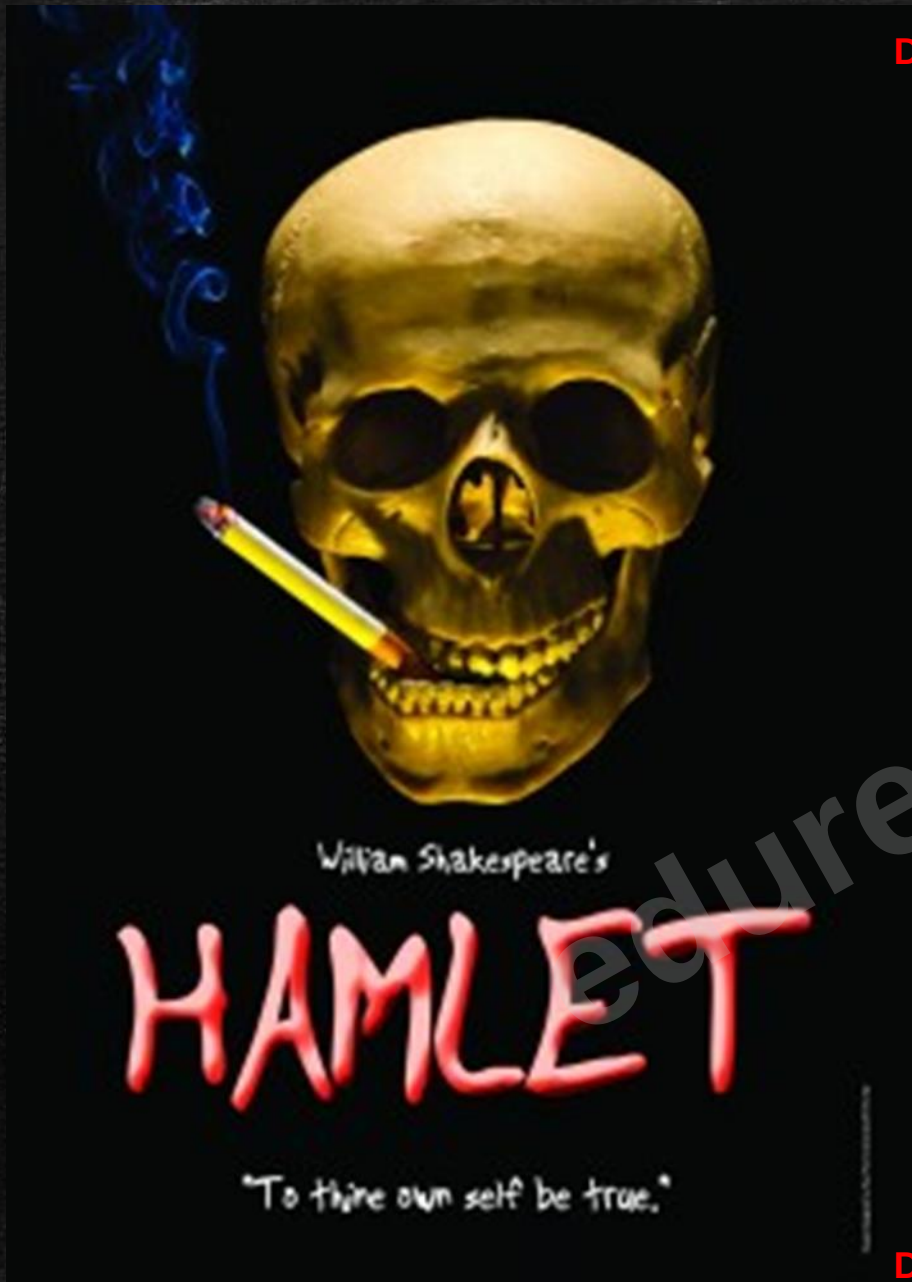






A Summary:

Major Conflict:

- Hamlet feels a responsibility to avenge his father's murder by his uncle Claudius, but Claudius is now the king and thus well protected.
- Moreover, Hamlet struggles with his doubts about whether he can trust the ghost and whether killing Claudius is the appropriate thing to do.



Overview:



- King Hamlet is dead.
- Claudius, king Hamlet's brother, marries Queen Gertrude.
- The ghost of the dead king appears.
- In a soliloquy, Prince Hamlet, the son of King Hamlet and Queen Gertrude, expresses his anger against his mother for her hasty remarriage.
- The king asks Hamlet to stay in Denmark.
- Polonius, the king's counselor, and Laertes, his son, warn Ophelia, Polonius' daughter, against Hamlet.
- The ghost tells Hamlet that he must avenge his father's murder.

Overview:



- Hamlet asks a group of actors to act a play that shows events similar to the killing of King Hamlet in front of Claudius and Gertrude.
- Hamlet becomes sure of what the ghost told him.
- Hamlet wants to kill the king, but finds him praying.
- He confronts his mother and kills Polonius who was hiding behind the curtain.

Overview:



- The king sends Hamlet to England and sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with him, giving them orders to kill the prince.
- Ophelia becomes mad.
- Hamlet returns to Denmark.
- Claudius puts a plan to kill Hamlet by the poisoned sword in a duel with Laertes.
- Ophelia drowns in a pond.

Overview:



- Hamlet and Horatio are at the graveyard.
- A funeral comes and Hamlet discovers that it is Ophelia's coffin.
- Hamlet and Laertes fight.
- Hamlet accepts the fencing contest with Laertes.
- The king offers Hamlet the poisoned drink, but he does not take it. The Queen drinks it.
- Hamlet is wounded with the poisoned sword, and Hamlet wounds Laertes with the same sword.
- As Laertes is dying, he tells Hamlet that the king is to blame for the poisoned sword and the poison in the cup. Hamlet stabs the king and forces him to drink from the cup.

Overview:



- Fortinbras, the king of Norway, arrives with his army to conquer Denmark.
- Hamlet urges Horatio to tell his story.
- He says that he wishes Fortinbras to be made King of Denmark; then he dies.
- Fortinbras orders for Hamlet to be carried away like a brave soldier

Plot Act by Act:



ACT I

- A ghost resembling the late King Hamlet is spotted on a platform before Elsinore Castle in Denmark. King Claudius, who now rules Denmark, has taken King Hamlet's wife, Queen Gertrude as his new wife and Queen of Denmark.
- The ghost speaks to Hamlet declaring ominously that it is indeed his father's spirit, and that he was murdered by Claudius. Ordering Hamlet to seek revenge on the man who usurped his throne and married his wife, the ghost disappears with the dawn.

Plot Act by Act:



ACT II

- Polonius has his own theory about Hamlet's transformation; it is caused by Hamlet's love for his daughter Ophelia.
- Polonius decides to tell King Claudius the reason for Hamlet's recently odd behavior.

ACT III

- A group of traveling actors comes to Elsinore, and Hamlet seizes upon an idea to test his uncle's guilt. He will have the players perform a scene closely resembling the sequence by which Hamlet imagines his uncle to have murdered his father, so that if Claudius is guilty, he will react.
- Hamlet goes to kill Claudius but finds him praying. Since he believes that killing Claudius while in prayer would send Claudius's soul to heaven, Hamlet considers that it would be an inadequate revenge and decides to wait.
- Hamlet goes to confront his mother, in whose bedchamber Polonius has hidden behind a tapestry. Hamlet believes the king is hiding there and kills Polonius.

Plot Act by Act:



ACT IV

- King Claudius learns of Polonius' murder which shocks him and decides to send Hamlet away to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern immediately.
- King Claudius reveals his plans for Hamlet to be killed in England.
- Ophelia goes mad from the grief of losing her father and drowns in the river. Laertes wants to take revenge for his father's murder and King Claudius explains to him that Hamlet killed his father.

ACT V

- Hamlet explains to Horatio how he avoided the death planned for him in England and had courtiers' Rosencrantz and Guildenstern put to death instead.
- Hamlet fights Laertes. Hamlet wins the first two rounds against Laertes but is stabbed and poisoned fatally in the third round. Exchanging swords whilst fighting, Hamlet wounds and poisons Laertes who explains that his sword is poison tipped.
- Now dying, Hamlet stabs King Claudius with this same sword, killing him. Hamlet, dying, tells Horatio to tell his story.
- Hamlet recommends Young Fortinbras as the next King of Denmark. Horatio promises to tell all the story we have just witnessed, ending the play.

Phases in *Hamlet*:

- **RISING ACTION :**
- The ghost appears to Hamlet and tells Hamlet to revenge his murder.
- Hamlet feigns madness to his intentions.
- Hamlet stages the mousetrap play.
- Hamlet passes up the opportunity to kill Claudius while he is praying.



Phases in *Hamlet*:

- **CLIMAX :**
- When Hamlet stabs Polonius through the arras in Act III, scene iv, he commits himself to overtly violent action and brings himself into unavoidable conflict with the king.
- Another possible climax comes at the end of Act IV, scene iv, when Hamlet resolves to commit himself fully to violent revenge.



Phases in *Hamlet*:

- **FALLING ACTION:**
- Hamlet is sent to England to be killed.
- Hamlet returns to Denmark and confronts Laertes at Ophelia's funeral.
- The fencing match.
- The deaths of the royal family.



Act I, scene i:



- On a dark winter night outside Elsinore Castle in Denmark, an officer named Bernardo is on guard.
- Shortly thereafter, Bernardo is joined by Marcellus, another watchman, and Horatio, a friend of Prince Hamlet.
- Bernardo and Marcellus have urged Horatio to stand watch with them, because they believe they have something shocking to show him.
- In hushed tones, they discuss the apparition they have seen for the past two nights, and which they now hope to show Horatio: the ghost of the recently deceased King Hamlet, which they claim has appeared before them on the castle ramparts in the late hours of the night.
- Horatio is sceptical, but then the ghost suddenly appears before the men and just as suddenly vanishes. Terrified, Horatio acknowledges that the spectre does indeed resemble the dead King of Denmark.



Act I, scene i:

- Horatio declares that the ghost must bring warning of impending misfortune for Denmark, perhaps in the form of a military attack.
- He recounts the story of King Hamlet's conquest of certain lands once belonging to Norway, saying that Fortinbras, the young Prince of Norway, now seeks to reconquer those forfeited lands.
- The ghost materializes for a second time, and Horatio tries to speak to it. The ghost remains silent, however, and disappears again just as the cock crows at the first hint of dawn.
- Horatio suggests that they tell Prince Hamlet, the dead king's son, about the apparition. He believes that though the ghost did not speak to him, if it is really the ghost of King Hamlet, it will not refuse to speak to his beloved son.

Act I, scene ii:



- The morning after Horatio and the guardsmen see the ghost, King Claudius gives a speech to his courtiers, explaining his recent marriage to Gertrude, his brother's widow and the mother of Prince Hamlet.
- He mentions that young Fortinbras has written to him, rashly demanding the surrender of the lands King Hamlet won from Fortinbras's father, and dispatches Cornelius and Voltimand with a message for the King of Norway, Fortinbras's elderly uncle.
- Claudius turns to Laertes, the son of the Lord Chamberlain, Polonius. Laertes expresses his desire to return to France, where he was staying before his return to Denmark for Claudius's coronation.
- Polonius gives his son permission, and Claudius jovially grants Laertes his consent as well.

Act I, scene ii:



- Turning to Prince Hamlet, Claudius asks why “the clouds still hang” upon him, as Hamlet is still wearing black mourning clothes (I.ii.66).
- Gertrude urges him to cast off his “nightly colour,” but he replies bitterly that his inner sorrow is so great that his dour appearance is merely a poor mirror of it (I.ii.68).
- Trying to act like his father, Claudius declares that all fathers die, and all sons must lose their fathers.
- When a son loses a father, he is duty-bound to mourn, but to mourn for too long is unmanly and inappropriate.
- Claudius urges Hamlet to think of him as a father, reminding the prince that he stands in line to succeed to the throne upon Claudius’s death.

Act I, scene ii:



- With this in mind, Claudius says that he does not wish for Hamlet to return to school at Wittenberg (where he had been studying before his father's death), as Hamlet has asked to do.
- Gertrude echoes her husband, professing a desire for Hamlet to remain close to her.
- Hamlet stiffly agrees to obey her.
- Claudius claims to be so pleased by Hamlet's decision to stay that he will celebrate with festivities and cannon fire, an old custom called "the king's rouse."
- Ordering Gertrude to follow him, he escorts her from the room, and the court follows.

Act I, scene ii:



- Alone, Hamlet exclaims that he wishes he could die, that he could evaporate and cease to exist.
- He wishes bitterly that God had not made suicide a sin.
- Anguished, he laments his father's death and his mother's hasty marriage to his uncle.
- He remembers how deeply in love his parents seemed, and he curses the thought that now, not yet two month after his father's death, his mother has married his father's far inferior brother.

Act I, scene ii:



- Hamlet quiets suddenly as Horatio strides into the room, followed by Marcellus and Bernardo.
- Horatio was a close friend of Hamlet at the university in Wittenberg, and Hamlet, happy to see him, asks why he has left the school to travel to Denmark.
- Horatio says that he came to see King Hamlet's funeral, to which Hamlet curtly replies that Horatio came to see his mother's wedding.
- Horatio agrees that the one followed closely on the heels of the other.
- He then tells Hamlet that he, Marcellus, and Bernardo have seen what appears to be his father's ghost.
- Stunned, Hamlet agrees to keep watch with them that night, in the hope that he will be able to speak to the apparition.

Act I, scene iii:



- In Polonius's house, Laertes prepares to leave for France.
- Bidding his sister, Ophelia, farewell, he cautions her against falling in love with Hamlet, who is, according to Laertes, too far above her by birth to be able to love her honourably.
- Since Hamlet is responsible not only for his own feelings but for his position in the state, it may be impossible for him to marry her.
- Ophelia agrees to keep Laertes' advice as a "watchman" close to her heart but urges him not to give her advice that he does not practice himself.

Act I, scene iii:



- Polonius enters to bid his son farewell, giving him a great deal of advice about how to behave with integrity and practicality.
- Laertes leaves, bidding farewell to Ophelia once more.
- Alone with his daughter, Polonius asks Ophelia what Laertes told her before he left. Ophelia says that it was “something touching the Lord Hamlet” (I.ii.89).
- Polonius asks her about her relationship with Hamlet.
- She tells him that Hamlet claims to love her.
- Polonius sternly echoes Laertes’ advice, and forbids Ophelia to associate with Hamlet anymore.
- He tells her that Hamlet has deceived her in swearing his love, and that she should see through his false vows and rebuff his affections. Ophelia pledges to obey.

Act I, scene iv:



- It is now night. Hamlet keeps watch outside the castle with Horatio and Marcellus, waiting in the cold for the ghost to appear.
- The ghost appears, and Hamlet calls out to it.
- The ghost beckons Hamlet to follow it out into the night. His companions urge him not to follow, begging him to consider that the ghost might lead him toward harm.
- He follows after the apparition and disappears into the darkness.
- Horatio and Marcellus, stunned, declare that the event bodes ill for the nation.
- Horatio and Marcellus follow after Hamlet and the ghost.

Act I, scene v:



- In the darkness, the ghost speaks to Hamlet, claiming to be his father's spirit, come to rouse Hamlet to revenge his death, a "foul and most unnatural murder" (I.v.25).
- Hamlet is appalled at the revelation that his father has been murdered, and the ghost tells him that as he slept in his garden, a villain poured poison into his ear—the very villain who now wears his crown, Claudius.
- Hamlet's worst fears about his uncle are confirmed. "O my prophetic soul!" he cries (I.v.40).
- The ghost exhorts Hamlet to seek revenge, telling him that Claudius has corrupted Denmark and corrupted Gertrude, having taken her from the pure love of her first marriage and seduced her in the foul lust of their incestuous union.
- But the ghost urges Hamlet not to act against his mother in any way, telling him to "leave her to heaven" and to the pangs of her own conscience (I.v.86).

Act I, scene v:



- As dawn breaks, the ghost disappears.
- Hamlet swears to remember and obey the ghost.
- Horatio and Marcellus arrive upon the scene and frantically ask Hamlet what has happened, he refuses to tell them, and insists that they swear upon his sword not to reveal what they have seen.
- He tells them further that he may pretend to be a madman, and he makes them swear not to give the slightest hint that they know anything about his motives.
- Three times the ghost's voice echoes from beneath the ground, proclaiming, "Swear."
- Horatio and Marcellus take the oath upon Hamlet's sword

Act II, scene i:



- Polonius dispatches his servant Reynaldo to France with money and written notes for Laertes.
- As Reynaldo leaves, Ophelia enters, visibly upset. She tells Polonius that Hamlet, unkempt and wild-eyed, has accosted her.
- Hamlet grabbed her, held her, and sighed heavily, but did not speak to her.
- Polonius says that Hamlet must be mad with his love for Ophelia, for she has distanced herself from him ever since Polonius ordered her to do so.
- Polonius speculates that this lovesickness might be the cause of Hamlet's moodiness, and he hurries out to tell Claudius of his idea.

Act II, scene ii:



- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two of Hamlet's friends from Wittenberg arrive.
- They have been summoned by the king and queen because of their concern for Hamlet.
- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern agree to investigate.
- The ambassadors to Norway return and inform the king that there will be no war against Denmark, but he does want to travel through Denmark to attack the Poles.

Act II, scene ii:



- Polonius declares that the prince is mad with love for Ophelia.
- He shows the king and queen letters and love poems Hamlet has given to Ophelia, and proposes a plan to test his theory.
- Hamlet often walks alone through the lobby of the castle, and, at such a time, they could hide behind an arras (a curtain or wall hanging) while Ophelia confronts Hamlet, allowing them to see for themselves whether Hamlet's madness really emanates from his love for her.
- The king declares that they will try the plan. Gertrude notices that Hamlet is approaching, reading from a book as he walks, and Polonius says that he will speak to the prince.

Act II, scene ii:



- Polonius attempts to converse with Hamlet, who appears insane; he calls the old man a “fishmonger” and answers his questions irrationally. But many of Hamlet’s seemingly lunatic statements hide barbed observations about Polonius’s pomposity and his old age.
- As Polonius leaves, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter, and Hamlet seems pleased to see them.
- They discuss Hamlet’s unhappiness about recent affairs in Denmark. Hamlet asks why they have come. Sheepishly, the two men claim they have come merely to visit Hamlet, but he sternly declares that he knows that the king and queen sent for them. They confess this to be true, and Hamlet says that he knows why: because he has lost all of his joy and descended into a state of melancholy in which everything (and everyone) appears sterile and worthless.



Act II, scene ii:

- Rosencrantz smiles and says he wonders how Hamlet will receive a theatrical troupe that is currently traveling toward the castle.
- He is mad only some of the time and at other times is sane.
- Hamlet welcomes them and entreats one of them to give him a speech about the fall of Troy and the death of the Trojan king and queen, Priam and Hecuba.
- He announces that the next night they will hear *The Murder of Gonzago* performed, with an additional short speech that he will write himself.
- He resolves to devise a trap for Claudius, forcing the king to watch a play whose plot closely resembles the murder of Hamlet's father; if the king is guilty, he thinks, he will surely show some visible sign of guilt when he sees his sin re-enacted on stage. Then, Hamlet reasons, he will obtain definitive proof of Claudius's guilt. "The play's the thing," he declares, "wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king" (II.ii.581–582).

Act III, scene i:



- Claudius and Gertrude discuss Hamlet's behaviour with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, have been unable to learn the cause of his melancholy.
- They tell the king and queen about Hamlet's enthusiasm for the players.
- Gertrude and Claudius agree that they will see the play that evening.
- Claudius and Polonius intend to spy on Hamlet's confrontation with Ophelia.
- Polonius directs Ophelia to walk around the lobby. Polonius hears Hamlet coming, and he and the king hide.

Act III, scene i:



- Hamlet enters, speaking thoughtfully and agonizingly to himself about the question of whether to commit suicide to end the pain of experience:
- Hamlet sees Ophelia approaching.
- Having received her orders from Polonius, she tells him that she wishes to return the tokens of love he has given her.
- Hamlet denies having given her anything; he laments the dishonesty of beauty, and claims both to have loved Ophelia once and never to have loved her at all.
- He criticizes women for making men behave like monsters and for contributing to the world's dishonesty by painting their faces to appear more beautiful than they are. Working himself into a rage, Hamlet denounces Ophelia, women, and humankind in general, saying that he wishes to end all marriages. As he storms out, Ophelia mourns the "noble mind" that has now lapsed into apparent madness.

Act III, scene i:



- The king and Polonius emerge from behind the tapestry.
- Claudius says that Hamlet's strange behaviour has clearly not been caused by love for Ophelia and that his speech does not seem like the speech of insanity.
- He declares that he will send Hamlet to England, in the hope that a change of scenery might help him get over his troubles.
- Polonius agrees that this is a good idea, but he still believes that Hamlet's agitation comes from loving Ophelia.
- He asks Claudius to send Hamlet to Gertrude's chamber after the play, where Polonius can hide again and watch unseen; he hopes to learn whether Hamlet is really mad with love.

Act III, scene ii:



- That evening, in the castle hall now doubling as a theatre, Hamlet anxiously lectures the players on how to act the parts he has written for them.
- Horatio enters, and Hamlet, pleased to see him, praises him heartily, expressing his affection for and high opinion of Horatio's mind and manner, especially Horatio's qualities of self-control and reserve.
- Having told Horatio what he learned from the ghost—that Claudius murdered his father—he now asks him to watch Claudius carefully during the play so that they might compare their impressions of his behaviour afterward. Horatio agrees, saying that if Claudius shows any signs of guilt, he will detect them.

Act III, scene ii:



- The players enter and act out a brief, silent version of the play to come called a “dumbshow.”
 - In the dumbshow, a king and queen display their love.
 - The queen leaves the king to sleep, and while he is sleeping, a man murders him by pouring poison into his ear.
 - The murderer tries to seduce the queen, who gradually accepts his advances.
- When the murderer pours the poison into the sleeping king’s ear, Claudius rises and cries out for light.
- Chaos ensues as the play comes to a sudden halt, the torches are lit, and the king flees the room, followed by the audience.
- When the scene quiets, Hamlet is left alone with Horatio.

Act III, scene ii:



- Hamlet and Horatio agree that the king's behaviour was telling.
- Now extremely excited, Hamlet continues to act frantic and scatter-brained, speaking glibly and inventing little poems.
- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive to tell Hamlet that he is wanted in his mother's chambers.
- Polonius enters to escort Hamlet to the queen.
- Hamlet says he will go to her in a moment and asks for a moment alone.
- He steels himself to speak to his mother, resolving to be brutally honest with her but not to lose control of himself: "I will speak daggers to her, but use none" (III.ii.366).

Act III, scene iii:



- Badly shaken by the play and now considering Hamlet's madness to be dangerous, Claudius asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to escort Hamlet on a voyage to England and to depart immediately.
- They agree and leave to make preparations.
- Polonius enters and reminds the king of his plan to hide in Gertrude's room and observe Hamlet's confrontation with her.
- He promises to tell Claudius all that he learns.
- When Polonius leaves, the king is alone, and he immediately expresses his guilt and grief over his sin.
- He longs to ask for forgiveness, but says that he is unprepared to give up that which he gained by committing the murder, namely, the crown and the queen. He falls to his knees and begins to pray.

Act III, scene iii:



- Hamlet slips quietly into the room and steels himself to kill the unseeing Claudius.
- It occurs to him that if he kills Claudius while he is praying, he will end the king's life at the moment when he was seeking forgiveness for his sins, sending Claudius's soul to heaven.
- This is hardly an adequate revenge, Hamlet thinks, especially since Claudius, by killing Hamlet's father before he had time to make his last confession, ensured that his brother would not go to heaven.
- Hamlet decides to wait, resolving to kill Claudius when the king is sinning—when he is either drunk, angry, or lustful.
- He leaves.

Act III, scene iv:



- In Gertrude's chamber, the queen and Polonius wait for Hamlet's arrival.
- Polonius plans to hide in order to eavesdrop on Gertrude's confrontation with her son, in the hope that doing so will enable him to determine the cause of Hamlet's bizarre and threatening behaviour.
- Hamlet storms into the room and asks his mother why she has sent for him. She says that he has offended his father, meaning his stepfather, Claudius.
- He interrupts her and says that she has offended his father, meaning the dead King Hamlet, by marrying Claudius.
- Hamlet accosts her with an almost violent intensity and declares his intention to make her fully aware of her sin.

Act III, scene iv:



- Fearing for her life, Gertrude cries out. From behind the arras, Polonius calls out for help.
- Hamlet, realizing that someone is behind the arras draws his sword and stabs it through the tapestry, killing the unseen Polonius.
- Gertrude asks what Hamlet has done.
- The queen says his action was a “rash and bloody” deed, and Hamlet replies that it was almost as rash and bloody as murdering a king and marrying his brother (III.iv.26–28).
- Disbelieving, the queen exclaims, “As kill a king!” and Hamlet replies that she heard him correctly (III.iv.29).

Act III, scene iv:



- Hamlet lifts the arras and discovers Polonius's body:
- He bids the old man farewell, calling him an "intruding fool" (III.iv.30).
- He turns to his mother, declaring that he will wring her heart.
- He shows her a picture of the dead king and a picture of the current king, bitterly comments on the superiority of his father to his uncle, and asks her furiously what has driven her to marry a rotten man such as Claudius.
- She pleads with him to stop, saying that he has turned her eyes onto her soul and that she does not like what she sees there.
- Hamlet continues to denounce her and rail against Claudius, until, suddenly, the ghost of his father again appears before him.

Act III, scene iv:



- Hamlet speaks to the apparition, but Gertrude is unable to see it and believes him to be mad.
- The ghost comes to remind Hamlet that he has not yet killed Claudius and must achieve his revenge.
- Hamlet describes the ghost, but Gertrude sees nothing, and in a moment the ghost disappears.
- Hamlet tries desperately to convince Gertrude that he is not mad but has merely feigned madness all along, and he urges her to leave Claudius and regain her good conscience.
- He urges her as well not to reveal to Claudius that his madness has been an act.
- Gertrude agrees to keep his secret.
- He bids her goodnight, and leaves dragging Polonius's body behind him, Hamlet leaves his mother's room.

Act IV, scene i:



- Gertrude hurries to Claudius.
- She tells Claudius about her encounter with Hamlet. She says that he is as mad as the sea during a violent storm; she also tells Claudius that Hamlet has killed Polonius.
- Claudius wonders aloud how he will be able to handle this public crisis without damaging his hold on Denmark.
- He tells Gertrude that they must ship Hamlet to England at once and find a way to explain Hamlet's misdeed to the court and to the people.
- He calls Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, tells them about the murder, and sends them to find Hamlet.

Act IV, scene ii:



- Elsewhere in Elsinore, Hamlet has just finished disposing of Polonius's body.
- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear and ask what he has done with the body.
- Hamlet refuses to give them a straight answer.
- At last he agrees to allow Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to escort him to Claudius.



Act IV, scene iii:



- The king tells of Polonius's death and his intention to send Hamlet to England.
- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear with Hamlet, who is under guard.
- Hamlet reveals that Polonius's body is under the stairs near the castle lobby.
- The king tells Hamlet that he must leave at once for England. Claudius sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to ensure that he boards the ship at once.
- Claudius hopes that England will obey the sealed orders he has sent with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
- The orders call for Prince Hamlet to be put to death.

Act IV, scene iv:



- On a nearby plain in Denmark, young Prince Fortinbras marches at the head of his army, traveling through Denmark on the way to attack Poland.
- Fortinbras orders his captain to go and ask the King of Denmark for permission to travel through his lands.
- On his way, the captain encounters Hamlet, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern on their way to the ship bound for England.
- Hamlet is amazed that men would fight over a piece of worthless ground when there are other more pressing things that blood could be split over.
- Disgusted with himself for having failed to gain his revenge on Claudius, Hamlet declares that from this moment on, his thoughts will be bloody.

Act IV, scene v:



- Gertrude and Horatio discuss Ophelia.
- Gertrude does not wish to see the girl, but Horatio says that Ophelia should be pitied, explaining that her grief has made her disordered and incoherent.
- Ophelia enters wearing flowers and singing strange songs, she seems to have gone mad.
- Claudius enters and hears Ophelia's ravings, he also mentions that Laertes has secretly sailed back from France.



Act IV, scene v:



- Noise echoes from somewhere in the castle. Claudius calls for his guards, and gentleman enters to warn the king that Laertes has come with a mob of commoners.
- Laertes storms into the hall wanting to avenge his father's death.
- Claudius attempts to soothe him by acknowledging that Polonius is dead. Gertrude nervously adds that Claudius is innocent in it.
- Ophelia enters, obviously insane, Laertes plunges again into rage.
- Claudius claims that he is not responsible for Polonius's death and says that Laertes' desire for revenge is noble, so long as he seeks revenge upon the proper person.
- Claudius convinces Laertes to hear his version of events, which he says will answer all his questions. Laertes agrees.

Act IV, scene vi:



- In another part of the castle, Horatio is introduced to a pair of sailors bearing a letter for him from Hamlet.
- In the letter, Hamlet says that his ship was captured by pirates, who have returned him to Denmark.
- He asks Horatio to escort the sailors to the king and queen, they have messages for them as well.
- He also says that he has much to tell of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
- Horatio takes the sailors to the king and then follows them to find Hamlet, who is in the countryside near the castle.

Act IV, scene vii:



- Whilst Horatio speaks to the sailors, Claudius and a calmer Laertes discuss Polonius's death.
- Claudius explains that he acted as he did, because both the common people and the queen love Hamlet very much.
- A messenger enters with the letter from Hamlet to Claudius, which tells the king that Hamlet will return tomorrow.
- Laertes is pleased that Hamlet has come back to Denmark, since it means that he will be revenged sooner.
- Claudius agrees that Laertes deserves to be revenged, and he encourages Laertes to kill Hamlet, because Hamlet's erratic behaviour has made him a threat to Claudius's reign.
- The king begins to think of a way for Laertes to ensure his revenge without creating any appearance of foul play.

Act IV, scene vii:



- Hamlet has been jealous in the past of Laertes' skill with a sword, he was praised by a Frenchman who had seen him fighting.
- The king thinks that if Hamlet could be tempted into a duel with Laertes, it might provide Laertes with the chance to kill him. Laertes agrees, and they settle on the plan.
 - Laertes will use a sharpened sword rather than the customary dull fencing blade.
 - Laertes also proposes to poison his sword, so that even a scratch from it will kill Hamlet.
- The king has a backup plan as well, proposing that if Hamlet succeeds in the duel, Claudius will offer him a poisoned cup of wine to drink from in celebration.
- Gertrude enters with tragic news. Ophelia, mad with grief, has drowned in the river.
- Upset to have lost his sister so soon after his father's death, Laertes flees the room.

Act V, scene i:



- In the churchyard, two gravediggers shovel out a grave for Ophelia.
- They argue whether Ophelia should be buried in the churchyard, since her death looks like a suicide.
- According to religious doctrine, suicides may not receive Christian burial.
- Hamlet and Horatio enter at a distance and watch the gravediggers work.
- Hamlet looks with wonder at the skulls they excavate to make room for the fresh grave and speculates darkly about what occupations the owners of these skulls served in life.
- The gravedigger, who does not recognize Hamlet as the prince, tells him that he has been a gravedigger since King Hamlet defeated the elder Fortinbras in battle, the very day on which young Prince Hamlet was born.
- Hamlet picks up a skull, and the gravedigger tells him that the skull belonged to Yorick, King Hamlet's jester. Hamlet tells Horatio that as a child he knew Yorick and is appalled at the sight of the skull.

Act V, scene i:



- Suddenly, the funeral procession for Ophelia enters the churchyard, including Claudius, Gertrude, Laertes, and many mourning courtiers.
- Hamlet, wondering who has died, notices that the funeral rites seem “maimed,” indicating that the dead man or woman took his or her own life.
- He and Horatio hide as the procession approaches the grave.
- As Ophelia is laid in the earth, Hamlet realizes it is she who has died. Laertes jumps into the grave to hold his sister.
- Grief-stricken and outraged, Hamlet bursts upon the company, declaring in agonized fury his own love for Ophelia.
- He leaps into the grave and fights with Laertes.
- The combatants are pulled apart by the funeral company.
- Gertrude and Claudius declare that Hamlet is mad. Hamlet storms off, and Horatio follows. The king urges Laertes to be patient, and to remember their plan for revenge.

Act V, scene ii:



- The next day at Elsinore Castle, Hamlet tells Horatio how he plotted to overcome Claudius's scheme to have him murdered in England.
- He replaced the sealed letter carried by the unsuspecting Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, which called for Hamlet's execution, with one calling for the execution of the bearers of the letter—Rosencrantz and Guildenstern themselves. He feels sorry for having behaved with such hostility toward Laertes.
- In Laertes' desire to avenge his father's death, he says, he sees the mirror image of his own desire, and he promises to seek Laertes' good favour.
- Osric has come to tell them that Claudius wants Hamlet to fence with Laertes and that the king has made a wager with Laertes that Hamlet will win.
- A lord enters and asks Hamlet if he is ready to come to the match, as the king and queen are expecting him. Against Horatio's advice, Hamlet agrees to fight.
- The court marches into the hall, and Hamlet asks Laertes for forgiveness, claiming that it was his madness, and not his own will, that murdered Polonius. Laertes says that he will not forgive Hamlet.
- In the meantime, he says, he will accept Hamlet's offer of love.

Act V, scene ii:



- They select their foils (blunted swords used in fencing), and the king says that if Hamlet win the first or second hit, he will drink to Hamlet's health, then throw into the cup a valuable gem (actually the poison) and give the wine to Hamlet.
- The duel begins. Hamlet strikes Laertes but declines to drink from the cup, saying that he will play another hit first.
- He hits Laertes again, and Gertrude rises to drink from the cup. The king tells her not to drink, but she does so anyway.
- Laertes remarks under his breath that to wound Hamlet with the poisoned sword is almost against his conscience. But they fight again, and Laertes scores a hit against Hamlet, drawing blood.
- Scuffling, they manage to exchange swords, and Hamlet wounds Laertes with Laertes' own blade.
- The queen falls. Laertes, poisoned by his own sword, declares, "I am justly kill'd with my own treachery" (V.ii.318).
- The queen moans that the cup must have been poisoned, calls out to Hamlet, and dies.

Act V, scene ii:



- Laertes tells Hamlet that he, too, has been slain, by his own poisoned sword, and that the king is to blame both for the poison on the sword and for the poison in the cup.
- Hamlet runs Claudius through with the poisoned sword and forces him to drink down the rest of the poisoned wine.
- Claudius dies crying out for help.
- Hamlet tells Horatio that he is dying and exchanges a last forgiveness with Laertes, who dies after absolving Hamlet.
- The sound of marching echoes through the hall, and a shot rings out nearby. Hamlet says that he wishes Fortinbras to be made King of Denmark; then he dies.
- Fortinbras marches into the room accompanied by the English ambassadors, who announce that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.
- Horatio says that he will tell everyone assembled the story that led to the gruesome scene now on display. Fortinbras orders for Hamlet to be carried away like a soldier.