

1 - THE OPENING OF THE PLAY

What effect does the opening of the play have on the audience?

WHAT YOU NEED

- Some pieces of paper, or a notebook and something to write with.
- A copy of Act 1 Scene 1 of Hamlet, on the page or on screen to read.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit [this page](#).

ACTIVITY

- Visit the story 'scene by scene' page on the RSC Learning Zone, [here](#). Read the summary of Act 1 Scene 1.
- Imagine you are one of the guards on the night watch, standing on the battlements of Elsinore. Write a list of what you might see around you. What can you see in the castle? Beyond the castle walls? In the night sky? Write a list of what you might be able to hear. The ghost has appeared for the last two nights. How might you be feeling? Write those feelings down.
- Read Act 1 Scene 1, up to Marcellus' line, 'Tis gone and will not answer'.
- Ask yourself: What do you notice about the length of the lines? Who do you think is the most important character in the scene? What do you think is the atmosphere of the scene?
- Choose 10 words which you think are the most important words in this section.
- For each word, choose a way of saying that word and a strong gesture that could go with it. Say the words out loud and make your gestures.
- Visit the staging [page](#) on the RSC Learning Zone and look at the images of the first appearance of the Ghost. Write a list of what the images have in common.
- Ask yourself: Why do you think the Ghost has appeared to the guards? What are you interested in now? What effect do you think the opening of the play has on the audience?

EXTENSION

- Create a soundscape for the opening of the play.
- Look again at the lists of sights, sounds and feelings that you wrote as if you were one of the guards. Use those lists as your starting point.
- Think of how you can create the sounds. Include any sounds that might go with the feelings that you imagined, such as the beating of a heart. What sound will you use for the moments when the ghost appears and disappears?
- Record all the sounds you will need to create the atmosphere.
- Include the 10 words that you chose, in the order that they come in the script. Record yourself saying them as you think they should be said.

- Edit together what you have recorded, to create a soundscape with a beginning, climax and end.