10 - TO BE OR NOT TO BE

What is the ethical dilemma that Hamlet faces in the play?

WHAT YOU NEED

- Some pieces of paper, and something to write and draw with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit **this page.**
- A copy of Act 3 Scene 1 from Hamlet, to read either on the page or onscreen.

ACTIVITY

- Hamlet has been visited by the Ghost of his father, who has asked his son to 'revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.' Hamlet must decide whether or not to kill Claudius. It is a complex ethical dilemma, which he wrestles with in the play.
- Imagine you are Hamlet. Take two pieces of paper and put them on opposite sides of the room. On one piece write a list of all the reasons why Hamlet SHOULD NOT kill Claudius. On the other piece, write a list of all the reasons why he SHOULD. Walk between the two pieces of paper as you add to your ideas. Bear in mind what Hamlet feels like doing, what he is expected to do and what he believes he should do. If you have time, research how revenge was regarded in 1600, when Shakespeare first created the play, and use your research to inform your thoughts.
- When you have written down all your ideas, walk between the two pieces of paper as if you are Hamlet, reading aloud each reason. What does this tell you about how Hamlet might be feeling?
- Visit the language key scenes page on the RSC Learning Zone **here.** Work through the activities on this page, making sure that you have understood the speech, read it aloud and looked at the images showing Hamlet at this moment in past RSC productions.
- Imagine you are Hamlet. Write a letter to you father, telling him how you feel.

EXTENSION

- If you were Hamlet and you were feeling like he is in this speech, where in the castle of Elsinore would you go to be safe?
- Use whatever you can find at home to build an imaginary safe place for Hamlet. Sit in that place and, as if you are Hamlet, read aloud the letter you have written to your father.
- Read aloud the 'To be or not to be' speech as if you are Hamlet.