

14 - OPHELIA

What drives Ophelia to madness?

WHAT YOU NEED

- Some pieces of paper, or a notebook and something to write or draw with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit [this page](#).
- A copy of Act 4 Scene 5 from Hamlet, to read either on the page or onscreen.

ACTIVITY

- Read Act 4 Scene 5 from the beginning of the scene up to where there is a 'noise within' and a messenger enters. On a big piece of paper, write three lists: what others say about Ophelia, what Ophelia says, and what she does.
- At the bottom of your paper, write down the possible causes for Ophelia's state of mind. Draw lines linking those causes to what you have found out from reading Act 4 Scene 5.
- Find the place in Act 4 Scene 5 when Ophelia re-enters. Read from there until Laertes' line, 'Did you see this, O God?'
- Add to your lists, and link what you have written to your possible causes for Ophelia's state of mind.
- Visit the RSC Learning Zone [here](#) and select Ophelia. Work through to fill in the grid.

EXTENSION

- Find the speech in Act 4 Scene 7 where Gertrude describes Ophelia's death, which begins, 'There is a willow grows aslant a brook'.
- Read the speech aloud. As you read, pick out the key words in each line and use gestures that could go with those key words to make their meaning clear.
- Make a memorial for Ophelia. You could draw, model, collage or use digital technology to create your memorial. Include at least three phrases from Gertrude's speech in your memorial. Continue adding words from the rest of the play that you think are appropriate to remember Ophelia with.