

15 - ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

What role do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern fulfill in the play?

WHAT YOU NEED

- Some pieces of paper, or a notebook and something to write with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit [this page](#) and play [this clip](#).
- A copy of Hamlet Act 2 Scene 2, to read either on the page or onscreen.

ACTIVITY

- Claudius and Gertrude send for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to come to Elsinore.
- Read Act 2 Scene 2 from the beginning until Rosencrantz and Guildenstern exeunt.
- Ask yourself: How is the relationship between Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern described? As children, how might they have spent time together?
- Gertrude says that Hamlet has 'talked much' of his old friends and that he 'adheres' to them. As if you are Hamlet, think of an event that might have happened with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and write a short account of it.
- Read Rosencrantz's lines from the beginning of Act 2 Scene 2 aloud, as if he is eager to please the King and Queen. Read them aloud again, as if he is reluctant to be there. Repeat this exercise with Guildenstern's first lines.
- Ask yourself: what motivates Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to come to Elsinore? Bear in mind this may be different for each of them. What might be the penalty for them if they refused the King's request?
- Visit [this page](#) on the RSC Learning Zone. Read the information and then click to read and explore the script.
- Deciding what the characters are trying to achieve is one of the ways in which the actors at the RSC work out how to play a scene effectively. What do you think Hamlet is trying to achieve in this scene? What is his objective? What is Rosencrantz's objective? What is Guildenstern's objective? Write your ideas down.
- Watch the film 'play scene in performance' from 1.23-end. Write down what you think the objectives of the actors were in this version of the scene? Were they similar or different from your own?
- Visit the Hamlet Schools Broadcast Q and A [here](#). Watch from 1.00-1.50, titled 'Why are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the plot?'
- Ask yourself: What role do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern fulfill in the play?

EXTENSION

- Design and make Rosencrantz and Guildenstern puppets. You can be ambitious as you like or keep it simple. You could use modelling clay, for example, or simply wooden spoons with faces.
- Bring your puppets to life, by trying out some of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's lines from the play. As you animate your puppets and speak their lines, consider how Hamlet might feel about his childhood friends acting as puppets of Claudius.