

18 - WHEN HAMLET CONFRONTS GERTRUDE

How might you stage the closet scene in performance?

WHAT YOU NEED

- A large piece of paper, a notebook, and something to write or draw with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit [this page](#).
- A copy of Act 3 Scene 4 from Hamlet, to read either on the page or onscreen.

ACTIVITY

- Visit the 'language analysis' page on the RSC Learning Zone [here](#). Click on 'Analysing themes' and select 'theme of revenge'. Click on 'read the closet scene Act 3 Scene 4' to see the script.
- Read the extract from this key scene.
- Ask yourself: What happens to make Gertrude ask, 'What wilt thou do?' Where is Polonius hidden?
- Bring the scene to life by creating a 3D map. Using a large piece of paper, draw a floor map of Gertrude's closet – include the entrance into the room, any furniture that might be in the room, and where Polonius is hidden. Decide where the audience would be sitting to experience the scene.
- Use counters, plastic figures or create your own models to represent the characters. Read the extract again, and as you read, experiment with where everyone might move and interact with each other. What staging choices might you make to create the most dramatic closet scene?
- Read the whole of Act 3 Scene 4. Later in the scene, the Ghost of Hamlet's father appears to him. Gertrude cannot see the Ghost, but Hamlet and the audience can.
- Using your 3D map, experiment with where the Ghost appears, how Hamlet and Gertrude might re-act, and how the audience will understand that Gertrude cannot see the Ghost?
- Make director's notes on how you might stage this scene in performance.

EXTENSION

- Visit the RSC Learning Zone [here](#). Click on 'Analysing themes' and select 'theme of revenge'.
- Read the information, research the suggested scenes, and fill in the grid to analyse the theme of mortality in Act 3 Scene 4.