

# 5 - THE BACKSTORY

How does Hamlet respond to the changes in his life before and as the play begins?

## WHAT YOU NEED

- A big piece of paper, a notebook and something to write with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit [this page](#).
- A copy of Act 1 Scene 2 from Hamlet, to read either on the page or onscreen.

## ACTIVITY

- Visit the RSC Hamlet Schools Broadcast Q and A with the actors from our 2016 production of the play [here](#) and watch the section titled 'Hamlet the student' (time code 11.30-12.00).
- Before the play begins, Hamlet was a student at Wittenberg University. He has come back to Elsinore for his father's funeral.
- Read Act 1 Scene 2, up to the stage direction, 'Exeunt all but Hamlet'. Make a list of any facts: things that you find out from the script which are true. For example, Prince Hamlet is Queen Gertrude's son.
- Make a list of inferences: things you think might be true. For example, what the characters are feeling.
- Make a list of questions: things you want to know after reading this section.
- On your big piece of paper, draw an outline of a human figure to represent Hamlet. Around the outside of it write down everything that has changed in Hamlet's life just before the play begins. Use the lists you have written to help you.
- Re-read the section from Act 1 Scene 2 again, this time imagining all the things that you think Hamlet would secretly like to do or say.
- Inside your Hamlet outline, write down how Hamlet feels, both in your own words and using quotations from Act 1 Scene 2.

## EXTENSION

- Visit the RSC Hamlet Schools Broadcast Q and A with the actors from our 2016 production of the play [here](#).
- Watch the section titled, 'Is his mother's marriage worse than his father's death?' (time code 13.10-13.45).
- Watch the section titled, 'Do you actually feel like Hamlet when you are acting?' (6.05-7.20)

- Imagine you are Hamlet in Act 1 Scene 2, just after all the other characters have left. Choose a piece of music that you think suits that moment and listen to it. As you listen, write as if you are Hamlet writing in his diary.