

# 6 - HAMLET'S FIRST SOLILOQUY

What exercises do RSC actors do in rehearsal to explore a soliloquy?

## 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](#).
- A copy of Act 1 Scene 2 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 Hamlet's language'. Read the instructions and watch the film 'exploring a soliloquy' (from the beginning to 0.34 seconds in).
- Find Hamlet's soliloquy in Act 1 Scene 2 which starts 'O, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt.' Read the whole speech aloud.
- Read the speech aloud again. As you read aloud, stand up on the first full stop, sit down on the next one and then continue standing up or sitting down every time you come to a full stop or question mark. When you come to a comma, stamp your foot.
- Continue watching the film of Paapa Essiedu performing this soliloquy and exploring the punctuation of the speech (from 0.34-3.36).
- Ask yourself: What have you found out about Hamlet's thoughts by doing the exercise? Make notes.
- Read the speech aloud again, this time exaggerating the sounds in the words. Make the most of the open vowel sounds, speaking the consonant sounds as precisely as you can, and paying particular attention to any repeated sounds.
- Continue watching the film to see Paapa exploring the speech in the same way (from 3.36-5.24).
- Ask yourself: How do the sounds in this speech help us to understand how Hamlet is feeling? Make notes.
- The speech is written in blank verse. Blank verse describes verse that doesn't rhyme but still uses iambic pentameter. Look at the speech again. This time, just speak aloud the last word of every verse line.
- Continue watching the rest of the film to see Paapa exploring the speech in the same way (from 5.24).
- Ask yourself: In this speech, which words come at the line endings which help us understand the things concerning Hamlet? Make notes.
- Now you have done these exercises, write a sentence which describes how this speech changes the relationship between Hamlet and the audience.

## EXTENSION

- If you have time, find another soliloquy from near the end of the play, and work through it using the same exercises that you have done for this speech.
- Ask yourself: How do the punctuation, sounds and line endings of the later speech compare with this one? How would you say Hamlet has been changed by the events of the play between the two soliloquies, and write down your thoughts.