



HAMLET

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
EDUCATION ACTIVITIES PACK

This pack supports the RSC's 2013 production of *Hamlet* which opened on 14 March at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon and runs until 28 September 2013.

This pack has been written for use with Key Stage 5 Drama, Theatre Studies and English students, but many of the activities can be adapted for younger age groups. The three extended exercises aim to help students explore significant features of the 2013 RSC *Hamlet* rehearsals and production.

These activities can be used in conjunction with a theatre visit or they can stand alone.

ABOUT OUR EDUCATION WORK

We want children and young people to enjoy the challenge of Shakespeare and achieve more as a result of connecting with his work. Central to our education work is our manifesto for Shakespeare in schools, [Stand up for Shakespeare](#). We know that children and young people can experience Shakespeare in ways that excite, engage and inspire them.

We believe that young people get the most out of Shakespeare when they:

- Do Shakespeare on their feet - exploring the plays actively as actors do
- See it live - participate as members of a live audience
- Start it earlier - work on the plays from a younger age

ABOUT ENSEMBLE

We also believe in the power of ensemble - a way of working together in both the rehearsal room and across the company enabling everyone's ideas and voices to be heard.

Director David Farr created a rehearsal space where all the actors were encouraged to contribute ideas, unlock the meaning of the text together, answer the unanswered questions in the play, improvise the 'back-story' and flesh out the relationships between the characters until the whole company were immersed in the world of *Hamlet*.

He also worked closely with the whole creative team as they built the production layer by layer, with design, voice and text, dialect, movement, music and sound, lighting and projection all playing a role in creating a unique interpretation of this play.

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These symbols are used throughout the pack:

	READ Contextual notes from the 2012 production
	ACTIVITY A classroom or open space activity
	LINKS Useful web addresses

MORE RESOURCES



Visit www.rsc.org.uk/education/resources for more resources on Shakespeare's plays including more teachers' packs like this one.

Use the [Resource Bank](#) to search for images, videos and information about past productions.

More teaching activities to support your active approaches to Shakespeare can be found in our book, *RSC Shakespeare Toolkit for Teachers*, which is available to buy at the [RSC Shop](#).

We also run a range of courses for teachers and students - for more information: www.rsc.org.uk/education

All photos by Keith Pattison © RSC
Pack written and designed by RSC Education

BACKGROUND

DATING THE PLAY



Hamlet was written about 1601, two years after the opening of the Globe Theatre on the south bank of the River Thames. It's probably Shakespeare's most famous play and certainly his longest. It's an exceptionally mature example of Elizabethan revenge tragedy.

Modern directors can create their working script from three early texts:

- The first (or 'bad') quarto (1603)
- The second ('good') quarto (1604)
- The folio edition (1623)



For more info about the general staging practices in Shakespeare's time, explore our resources here:

www.rsc.org.uk/education/online-resources/shakespeare-social-and-historical-context.aspx

SYNOPSIS



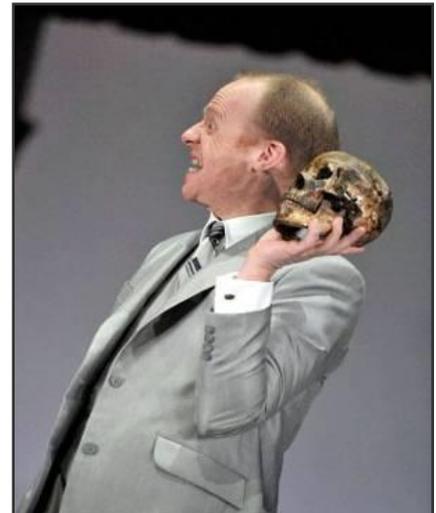
Hamlet tells the story of the young Prince of Denmark whose father has recently died. The ghost of Hamlet Senior appears to his son, demanding that he takes revenge for his father's murder at the hands of his father's brother, now King Claudius of Denmark. King Claudius has not only claimed his brother's crown, he has married his widow - all within two months of his brother's death.

Young Hamlet, grieving for his dead father and now besieged by doubts about the political and spiritual implications of taking revenge, considers his options...



Full summary of the plot:

www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/hamlet/synopsis.aspx



Jonathan Slinger as Hamlet in the 2013 production © RSC

DESIGNING THE 2013 PRODUCTION

 The 2013 RSC production of *Hamlet* (directed by David Farr and designed by John Bausor) is set in a relatively modern time, in northern Europe. Below we've described the different areas of the set design.

A FENCING HALL

The action takes place in a fencing hall, presumably a part of the Castle of Elsinor. The general impression is of a place of long tradition, one where even walls seem steeped in the personal histories of its inhabitants. The parquet floor is scuffed; the walls need painting; the lighting - from fluorescent strips and hanging lamps - is haphazard; the furniture is a collection of odd chairs, two benches and an old table. Everything is well-worn and well-used. In the vaulted ceiling two windows shed grid-like lighting on occasion.



The set of the 2013 production of *Hamlet* © RSC

SET FOR *THE MOUSETRAP*

At the far end of the fencing hall is a raised platform with red curtains and footlights, the sort of stage used for prize-giving in schools. In this production it's used for *The Mousetrap* (the play put on by the visiting players). On the back wall of the stage, a motto is engraved: 'mens sano in corpore sano'. Also hanging on the back wall are fencing foils and masks. And lying in a corner, a rolled-up Danish flag.

BLASTED EARTH

The wooden floor is overlaid onto burnt-black earth. Scattered around the soil surrounding the floor, there are skulls and bones. Later in the play, parts of the floor are lifted to reveal more black earth containing skulls.

From the thrust stage, walkways (called 'vomitoria') lead through the audience into the darkness.



Pippa Nixon as Ophelia in the 2013 production © RSC



The people of Elsinor in the 2013 production © RSC

TIMELESS COSTUMES

The costumes are modern but not contemporary. They hint at cold Scandinavian winters.

Each costume reflects the particular interpretative choices for that character:

Claudius is well-dressed and elegant.

Middle-aged **Gertrude** wears furs and satin for her wedding festivities.

Bookish **Ophelia** is simply dressed in a practical skirt, sweater and flat brown shoes.

At first neatly dressed in a dinner suit, **Hamlet**'s clothing deteriorates as the play progresses.

He is wearing full fencing dress with he speaks with the Ghost.

The fencing jacket Hamlet wears resembles a strait-jacket.

The people of the **Court** (see photo on previous page) are elegant and at times wear fencing masks.



Greg Hicks as Claudius in the 2013 production © RSC



Charlotte Cornwell as Gertrude and Nicolas Tennant as Guildenstern in the 2013 production © RSC



Pippa Nixon as Ophelia in the 2013 production © RSC



Jonathan Slinger as Hamlet in the 2013 production © RSC

THE 'POETIC SPACE' OF HAMLET



In an on-stage interview about the production, the director David Farr talks about how important it was for him to discover the production's 'poetic space'. By this, he means a place where this action can happen and these characters can realistically exist (for example, a fencing hall in an old castle), but also a place which echoes the central meanings in the play.



(Listen to the interview: www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/hamlet/audio-directors-talk.aspx)

The 2013 interpretation highlights the need to hide any vulnerability in this dangerous world - to wear your fencing mask and be on guard at all times. For this culture, this paranoia and secretiveness leads to its collapse.

This sense of wearing a mask, and hiding our true selves is represented by the veneer of the wooden floor. Under this floor lies the blackened earth which represents the truth. The motto on the back wall is a reminder of Hamlet Senior's regime and mocks Hamlet's deteriorating mental state as well as the corruption of Claudius's Elsinor.

When the Ghost of Hamlet Senior appears to Hamlet, the Ghost is wearing fencing costume. Fencing is thought of as 'a sport of kings'. But young Hamlet isn't a natural fencer – he's a philosopher rather than a man of action. This highlights the heart of Hamlet's problem: unlike Laertes and Fortinbras, Hamlet dwells on possible outcomes rather than taking action. Hamlet is an anti-hero, the opposite of the Elizabethan ideal, and falls short of all the classical heroes, such as Priam and Hercules – characters who Hamlet himself cites as natural leaders.



Fencing in the 2013 production of *Hamlet* © RSC

EXPLORING THESE IDEAS

The description above of the 2013 *Hamlet* set design as a 'poetic space' can be used in the activity below. The exercises aim to help students understand that Shakespeare's plays are written to be interpreted in the theatre and to appreciate how directors and designers go about that process.

ACTIVITY 1: DESIGNING A POETIC SPACE



These exercises are intended to deepen students' practical understanding of poetic space.

1. Print off and hand out the **description of the set design** (see above) from the 2013 production. Do *not* include the second to last section, 'The poetic space of *Hamlet*'.
2. When everyone has read this account, **explain** what David Farr means by 'poetic space': a design which comes naturally from the action of the play but which also functions symbolically or metaphorically.
3. Discuss which **themes and motifs** from the text this design might support. How might this design fit Farr's concept of poetic space?



You could refer to the list of themes and motifs here on our website:

www.rsc.org.uk/explore/hamlet/teachers-resources/themes.aspx

4. Looking at the **photographs** in this pack, consider what more can now be said about the connection between the design and the play's central ideas.
5. Using the **production photo galleries** for past productions of *Hamlet*, look at set designs from two or three different productions.



[\(www.rsc.org.uk/explore/shakespeare/plays/hamlet/\)](http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/shakespeare/plays/hamlet/)

Ask the students to identify how each production created a unique world by making specific interpretative choices.

Discuss what ideas in the text these designs support.

6. Now clear the space and **explore these ideas practically**.

Firstly, play **Where are we?**

As students to stand in a circle. One person enters the circle and begins an activity which tells us where we are. For example: stirring a saucepan on a stove, pushing a lawnmower, sunbathing, hitchhiking etc. A second person enters the circle – which might have become a kitchen where the saucepan is being stirred – and continues the action. For example, they might mime putting on a chef's hat and start shouting orders. So the kitchen is now a kitchen in a restaurant. A third person might be a lone diner in the restaurant, until his friend (a fourth player) comes to join him. The improvisation can continue as long as players have ideas to contribute which enliven and develop the situation and sense of place. Afterwards, discuss what happened in the improvisation to create atmosphere and a sense of place.

7. As a group talk through **space ideas** for a production of *Hamlet*.

Where might the action of the play take place? A corridor, throne room, garden, churchyard, library? Think about how these incidents below could take place in the space:

- an encounter with a ghost
- a royal party or procession
- a very private talk
- a theatre performance
- the entrance of a foreign army

continues →

8. **Play 'Where are we?' again.** This time use the brainstormed ideas for *Hamlet* and either assign characters from the play to players or ask them to choose their own. Ask for a volunteer to begin the scene. In the improvisation, nothing startling needs to happen. Each character should simply behave as he or she would in this place and with these people (as each one enters). Each character should have a reason for being in the space. For example, Hamlet comes to the library to look up something in a book; Claudius enters because he senses his step-son is here and wants to have a chat; Horatio comes looking for Hamlet, sees Claudius, bows and stands discreetly in the background; Polonius bustles in with an important message, and so on.
9. Using one of the **brainstormed settings**, play a short scene from the play. (At this point you might want to add one or two pieces of furniture and some props.) Decide on an audience/actor relationship (ie: thrust, proscenium, promenade etc) and where to have the entrances. For this exercise, you could use the edited version of Act 1 Scene 2 which we've given on the next page.
10. Discuss the **setting** the group chose. How well did it work for the action of the scene? What thematic ideas does this setting support? How?
11. Players are now ready to **design** their sets.
Ask each team of four or five to create a 'poetic space' for their production of *Hamlet*. Ask them to start by deciding what ideas in the text they particularly want to emphasise. They should include in their design:
- The type of **stage** and **audience/actor relationship** (thrust, proscenium, promenade, etc)
 - The placement of the **entrances/exits**
 - The **period** and **location** of the production
(Farr's production is set in northern Europe, mid-twentieth century)
- The designs may either be **illustrated** or **performed**. If performed, players can use either a scene from the text or improvised dialogue. The behaviour of the characters in the space should give the audience a sense of the location. (You might want to use more props here.)
12. As part of their **presentations**, the teams should explain how this design fulfils the requirements of 'poetic space':
- How does it come **naturally** from the play's action?
 - How is it **poetic**? What ideas in the play are echoed and emphasised by this design?

EXTRACT FROM ACT 1 SCENE 2 (EDITED)

Enter CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark, GERTRUDE the Queen, POLONIUS, LAERTES, OPHELIA and HAMLET.

CLAUDIUS Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our Queen,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy
Taken to wife. Nor have we herein barred
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along, For all, our thanks.
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son.

HAMLET A little more than kin, and less than kind.

KING How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET Not so much, my lord, I am too much in the 'son.'

QUEEN Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not for ever with thy veiled lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
Thou knowst 'tis common all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN If it be
Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET 'Seems, madam - nay it is, I know not 'seems'.
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, cold mother,
That can denote me truly. These indeed 'seem.'
But I have that within which passes show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father,
But you must know your father lost a father,
That father lost his; but to persevere
In obstinate condolment is a course
Of impious stubbornness, 'tis unmanly grief.
We pray you throw to earth
This unprevailing woe, and think of us
As of a father.

QUEEN Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet.
I pray thee stay with us, go not to Wittenberg.

HAMLET I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

KING Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come away.

BUILDING THE CHARACTERS

WHO IS HAMLET?



We all think we know who Hamlet is and yet the role has been played in countless different ways. With your students, look at some photographs online of RSC past productions here and compare the interpretations of Hamlet:



(You'll find the photos here: www.rsc.org.uk/explore/shakespeare/plays/hamlet/)

- David Warner's awkward schoolboy
- Kenneth Branagh's more than competent leader
- David Tennant's witty eccentric
- Toby Stephens' man of action
- Michael Pennington's sweet prince

Who is Hamlet? Lover, prince, child, scholar, philosopher, depressive, madman, adolescent, university wit, self-loather, procrastinator, good friend, or logical heir to the throne?

'CHANGEABILITY INCARNATE'

About actor Jonathan Slinger's Hamlet, theatre critic Clare Brennan says:

'[Slinger's Hamlet] is complexity and changeability incarnate. He finds every extreme in the character and pushes it to its limit.' (*The Observer*, 31 March 2013)

Jonathan himself acknowledges the sharp contrasts in his portrayal when he says in an interview:

'We are all one thing and the complete opposite at the same time.'

(www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/hamlet/video-interviews.aspx)

DEPRESSED OR ANGRY?



The search for the psychological reality of this character lies at the heart of David Farr's production. In a video interview with Farr (www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/hamlet/video-interviews.aspx) he says that for him Hamlet's depressive nature was a crucial starting point, in part because it accounts for his inability to act. Jonathan Slinger, on the other hand, came to rehearsals believing that Hamlet is more angry than sad. These different opinions were the basis for important discussions early in rehearsals.

IN REHEARSAL: BACKSTORY



Interviews with other actors (also at www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/hamlet/video-interviews.aspx) highlight the importance for them of **backstory**. Hamlet isn't the only character offering the actor a range of interpretative choices. There are so many ways to play Gertrude, ranging from sexy and glamorous to a dowdy middle-aged mum. Ophelia can be fragile but she can also be very tough. Even Horatio, seemingly the archetype of the honest, devoted friend, has been played in various ways.



In making these interpretative choices, the backstory plays a crucial role. The backstory is the character's personal history up until the start of the play's action. It includes the facts about the character included in the text and everything the actor creates around those facts to develop his character's life.

Backstory is an important tool for fleshing out a role and making the actor feel more fully connected to the character. To take Gertrude for example, backstory answers such important questions as 'Why did I marry Claudius so quickly?' 'How did I feel about my first husband?' 'Am I still in mourning?' 'Does it show?' and so on.

ELSINOR IN ACTION

As well as creating the backstories for specific characters, the actors spend much time in rehearsals thinking about how the household of Elsinor works. Where do the servants live? What are the particular responsibilities of each member of the household? When these small but important decisions are made it's much easier for actors to know how their character would behave during the play's action.

EXPLORING BACKSTORY

In the next activity your students will investigate an important aspect of the actor's craft and increase their understanding of the wide range of interpretative choice available to actors and directors of Shakespeare's plays.

ACTIVITY 2: BACKSTORY



This activity is designed to deepen your students' appreciation of the wide range of interpretative choice available for actors playing Shakespeare's characters. Making these choices creates the unique world for each production.

If you don't have enough time to do the full sequence below, many of the activities will stand alone or in combination with one or two others.

1. Divide your group into **four teams** and assign each team one of these four characters: Hamlet, Ophelia, Gertrude, Claudius.
2. Give each group the **worksheet** (see next pages) for their character and one other.
3. Ask the groups to **create more backstory questions** for their character - as many as they wish but each character should have at least ten. Encourage students to keep asking questions until they feel they know these characters very well.
4. Ask the groups to **answer their questions**, making decisions about their character. From these decisions, ask them to **create a character map**.
To create the map, write the character name in the centre and around it, radiate out the character facts, real or imagined, based on the decisions taken. Students can illustrate these if they wish.
5. Next ask the groups to **create a 'still-image'** of the character they have built – this should be as dramatic and distinct as possible. They can add props too.
The straightforward way to do this is to have one person play the character while the rest of the group are 'directors', coaching the actor as s/he creates the image.
Alternatively, the whole group can create an image which captures the spirit of the character, each of them creating the character and then all arranged in a way which reflects the essence of the role.
Tell the groups to keep these images secret for the moment - the other groups should not see them yet.
6. Next, ask the groups to **work together**: the Hamlet group to work with the Ophelia group, and the Gertrude group to work with the Claudius group.
The group which first created the character's backstory asks their paired group the same ten or so questions they devised for their character. For example, the Hamlet group asks their ten Hamlet questions to the Ophelia group and the Ophelia group makes decisions to answer these.
7. When each group has made decisions about the other character, the host group helps them to **create a still-image**. The four teams should now have created two Hamlets, two Gertrudes, two Ophelias and two Claudiuses.
8. Now try this exercise the actors did in the rehearsals for this production: **speed-dating!**
Ask 'characters' to meet in pairs and have two minutes to learn as much as they can about one another. You can extend this exercise by asking the pairs to make a still-image of their feelings about each another at the end of the two minutes.
9. Ask the groups to **position their images** around the room so that the two Ophelias are next to one another, the two Hamlets are side-by-side and so on, so that the choices made for each character can easily be compared.
10. The rest of the group **looks at each set of paired images**. How are they similar? How are they different?
Students from the groups not involved in creating the images discuss what facts about the characters' personal histories they can imagine from seeing the images.

11. Finally, ask students to **play the scene** – the extract from Act 1 Scene 2 on page 8.

Note: In the text, Ophelia is not included in this scene - however in production, she is often is. Even though she has no lines, there are many opportunities for her to decide how to behave in the course of the action, depending on her backstory choices.

12. With your students, **reflect** on this practical work.

You could describe the extremes to which each role could be played and still be supported by the text. For example: on one hand, Ophelia might be toughened by her childhood experiences and more able than Hamlet to hold her ground. On the other hand, she could be played as a very fragile, drug-taking young girl, desperate for advice and support.

What are the extremes for Hamlet, Gertrude and Claudius? How does the text support this?

CREATING A BACKSTORY – WORKSHEETS

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Son of the now dead King of Denmark, Queen Gertrude and step-son of King Cladius. He's been romantically involved with Ophelia. What other facts are there in the text?
What was Hamlet's relationship with his father like?
Is Hamlet more angry or more depressed about his mother's swift marriage to his uncle?
Describe Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship before the play begins.
[Your question]

Ophelia. Daughter of King Claudius's chief advisor, Polonius and sister of Laertes. She's been romantically involved with Hamlet. What other facts are there in the text?
Why does Ophelia find Hamlet attractive?
Is Ophelia close to her father? Her brother? Does she respect her father, resent him . . . ?
What happened to Ophelia's mother?
[Your question]

**Gertrude, Queen of Denmark.
Widow of King Hamlet Senior, newly married to his brother King Claudius. Mother of Hamlet.
What other facts are there in the text?**

What was Gertrude's relationship like with her first husband?

Why has she married Claudius?
Was she having an affair with him before her husband died?
Is she frightened about her future?

What kind of a mother has she been to Hamlet?

[Your question]

**Claudius, King of Denmark. Brother of Hamlet Senior whom he poisoned. Newly married to Gertrude, widow of his brother.
What other facts are there in the text?**

What was the chief motive for Claudius's murder of his brother? Does he want power? His wife? Envy? Greed?

How does Claudius feel about Gertrude?
Is he passionately in love with her?
Why did he marry her?

Does Claudius have leadership qualities?
Will he be a good king?

[Your question]

THE DIRECTOR'S VISION

A COMMON THEME



The gap between appearance and reality is one of Shakespeare's favourite themes: things aren't what they seem; people aren't what they appear to be.

In *Hamlet*, as in his other plays, the unreliability of appearances is related to moral corruption and decay. Imagery of disease runs throughout this play and these words appear in the text repeatedly: 'rank', 'sickness', 'rotten', gross'.

2013: TRUTH v CHARADE

For David Farr, director of the 2013 RSC production of *Hamlet*, this play is about truth versus charade, honesty against artifice. Jonathan Slinger's Hamlet might be far from the Elizabethan ideal he would need to be to act quickly and decisively, but he knows who he is and he speaks the truth.

In the end Hamlet succeeds, though at great cost, in exposing the moral corruption at the heart of Claudius' Denmark. Ironically, Hamlet does this by resorting to artifice: he uses *The Mousetrap* and pretends he's mad.

BE ON GUARD & HIDE YOUR SECRET

We can say that *Hamlet* is a play about theatre, artifice and role-playing. We can say that everyone in Denmark is playing a role because they're hiding an important aspect of their true selves. It's not that they're very different from how they appear, like for example Angelo is in *Measure for Measure*, but rather that everyone is hiding a secret.

Once more the fencing metaphor of Farr's poetic space supports the production's interpretation of the play. In Farr's Denmark's it's important to be constantly on guard and to practice your defence as well as your attack. You must hide your secret; you must hide your vulnerability.

For example: Claudius genuinely is the high-living, open-handed extrovert he appears to be, and could be an effective new leader. But he hides his wicked secret and his self-poisoning guilt. For Gertrude, the backstory created for her in this production provided her secret: she mourns the loss of her much-loved first husband, but must hide her pain. Showing her grief would be politically unwise. In this production, Ophelia has a secret history with Hamlet: they had a passionate love affair. In this context, Hamlet's behaviour is more painful and strange, but Ophelia has no-one she can talk to, which would allow her to reveal what she's truly feeling.



Fencing in the 2013 production of *Hamlet* © RSC

EXPLORING A MAJOR THEME

The next activity explores this theme of appearance vs reality. In the final exercise, ask your students to apply the work to a scene in the play where their characters must stay on guard and hide what they feel.

ACTIVITY 3: HIDE YOUR TRUTH



To do this activity, you need a large open space like a hall or large classroom.

Players should wear comfortable clothes and flat, soft-soled shoes.

1. Play **Tail Tag**.

Players wear a sock, a short scarf or a piece of fabric tucked into the back waistband of their trousers/skirt. Players move around the room. The aim of the game is for individual players to snatch as many other tails as they can at the same time as guarding their own tail.

When a player loses their tail, they're 'out' and must move to the side of the room.

Afterwards, ask them: How does it feel to be constantly on guard?

2. Now play **Pass the Mask**.

Ask players to form two lines facing each other about three feet apart. Call them Line A and Line B. As the leader, you stand at the head of Line A and give them an emotion or idea such as terror, contempt, jealousy, grief, guilt, suspicion and so on.

The first person in Line A makes a face - 'the mask' - which represents the idea you have given them.

They then use their whole body (as well as their face) to make the mask and direct this image at the player standing across from them in the opposite line. This player in Line B now makes his or her own version of this mask and passes it on to the next player in Line A, and so on.

When the mask has reached the end of the lines, ask all the players to work together to create a single still-image (or statue) representing this mask, using their bodies as well as their faces.

Finally, with a clap from you as leader, ask the still-image to come to life, move and make sound.

Explore three or four of these emotions in this way.

3. Build on these ideas by playing **Reveal Tag**.

Each player chooses a character from *Hamlet* and creates two faces for that character: a 'secret face' showing a feeling the character is trying to hide, and a 'public face'.

Ask the players to move around wearing their 'public masks'.

One player is 'it' and tries to tag as many players as possible.

When a player is tagged, they must freeze and show their 'secret face' until another player (who is still 'in' the game tags and unfreezes them. Then they rejoin the game, resuming their public face.

When the 'It' tires, a new 'It' is appointed.

Afterwards, ask them: How does it feel to have to move quickly between these two personas?

Is this like having to hide a secret?

4. Apply this work to the edited version of **Act 1 Scene 2** (see page 7).

This is a scene full of subtext, thoughts unspoken and often running counter to the text.

If they wish, players can use a set and staging approach they developed for Activity 1. But simple staging will do: for example, two chairs for thrones. The emphasis here in this exercise is on the contrast between what's *said* and what's *thought*.

Here's how this game works:

Cast the four roles - Ophelia, Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius.

(At the start of the scene, Claudius can address the audience rather than the court.)

As the 'actors' run the scene, at any time any member of the audience can call out, 'Freeze!'

Then they must name a character and say, 'Speak true'.

For example, after Claudius says, 'Now our Queen, Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy Taken to wife,' someone in the audience might say:

'Freeze. Gertrude, speak true!'

And after Hamlet's line: 'A little more than kin and less than kind', someone else might demand that Hamlet 'speak true.'

After a character has spoken his inner thoughts, they must repeat the line spoken just before they were interrupted, and the scene carries on until the next interruption.

5. Alternatively, teams of four, perhaps those which worked on the backstories, **plan the unspoken thoughts** before the scene is played.

If you compare two or more of these scenes, this will highlight how backstory helps to create the unique world of the production.

6. **Consider and discuss** the journey of truth's exposure through the play. Discuss with your students:
Despite so many people's efforts to hide it, where does it burst out?
What accounts for these moments?
Are Hamlet's efforts to reveal the truth effective? Are they heroic?