

'Hamlet: A Shakespeare Story' by Andrew Matthews and Tony Ross

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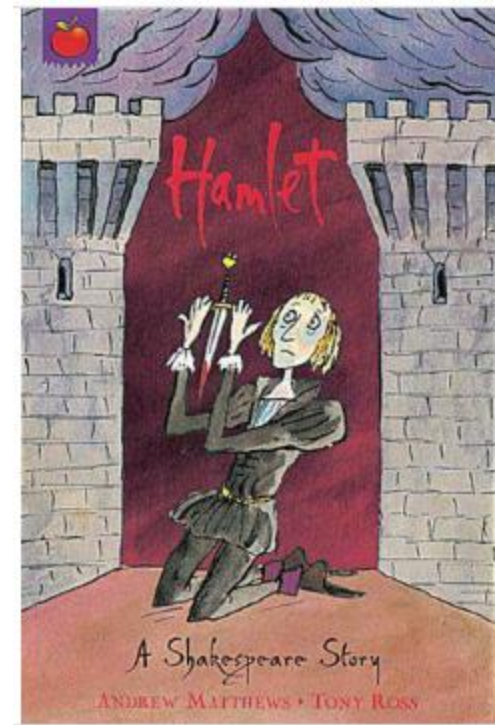
Ages 7-11

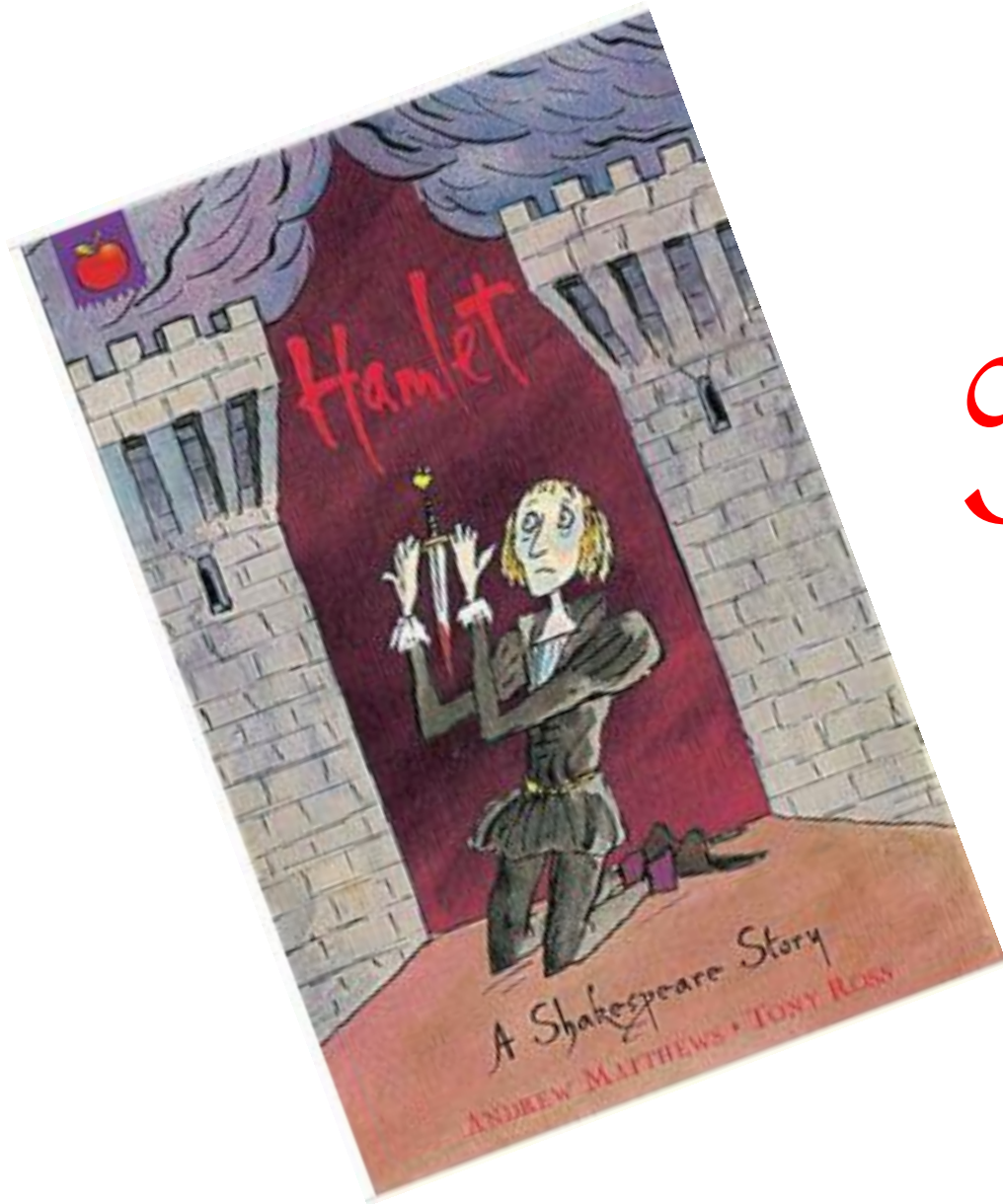
Reasons for selection and synopsis

A ghost, a tortured prince and an evil uncle come together in this explosive story about revenge, family and madness.

The story opens on a frosty night, when the ghost of Hamlet's father visits him. Many believe the late king was killed by a poisonous snake bite. However, the spirit reveals to Hamlet that he was murdered by his brother, Hamlet's uncle who now sits on the throne, married to his mother. Told from Hamlet's point of view, this is an accessible re-telling of one of Shakespeare's most popular tragedies.

You can watch a re-telling of the play here:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03f5fjr>

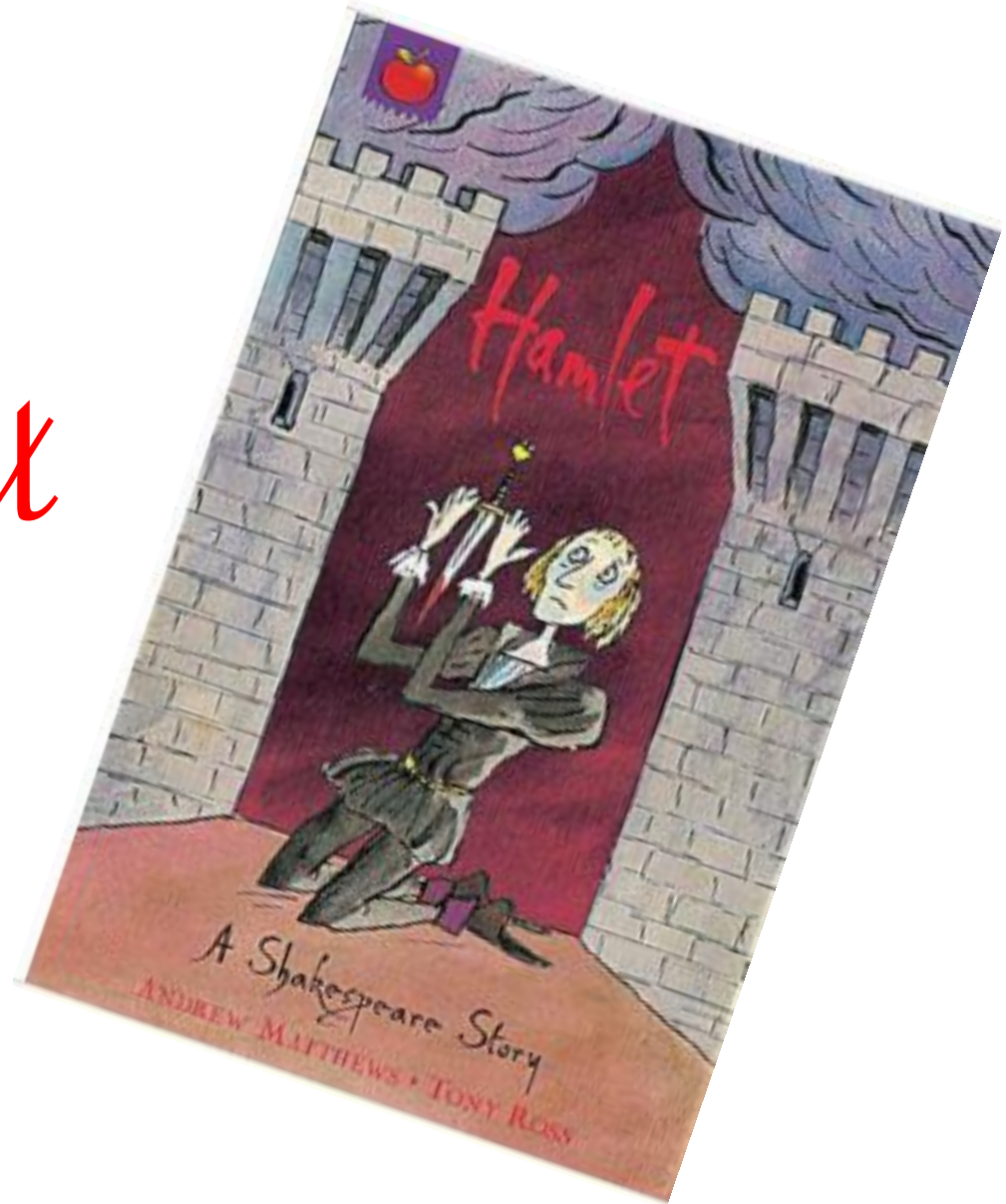


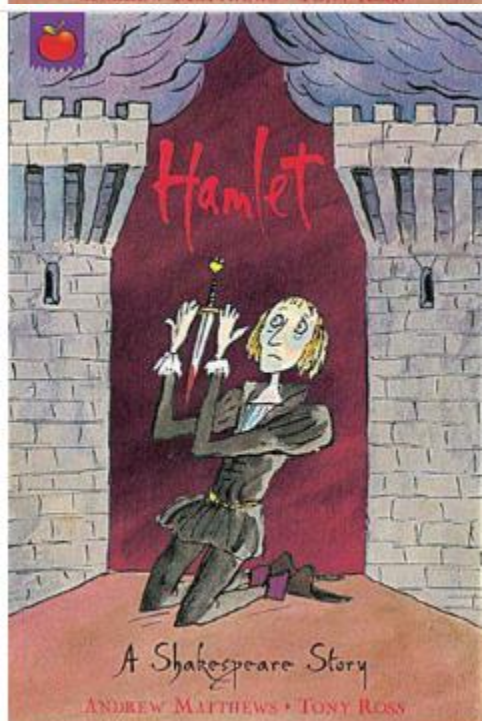
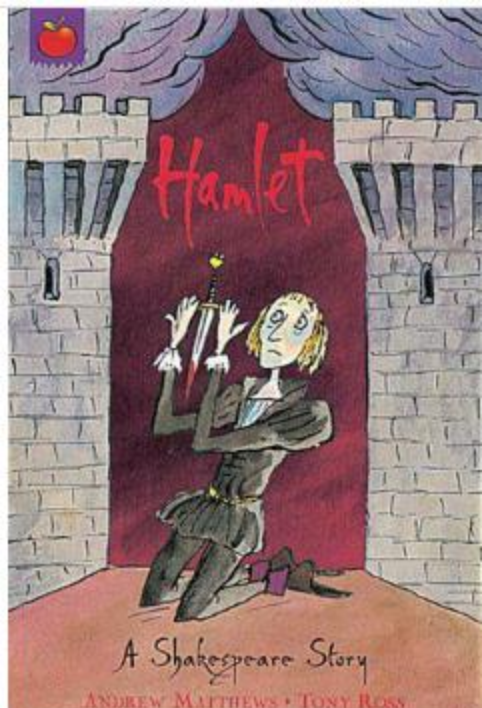


Hamlet

Summer 2

Week 2





Before reading...

Look carefully at the cast list. Draw lines to match the name of the character to their role in the story.

Hamlet	Daughter to Polonius
Gertrude	Son to the former King, nephew to Claudius
Horatio	Son to Polonius
Ophelia	Queen of Denmark and mother to Hamlet
Polonius	Lord Chamberlain
Claudius	Friend to Hamlet
Laertes	King of Denmark

Cast list

The Ghost of Hamlet's father



Gertrude

Queen of Denmark
Mother to Hamlet



Claudius

King of Denmark



Hamlet

Son to the former King
Nephew to Claudius



Horatio

Friend to Hamlet



Laertes

Son to Polonius



Ophelia

Daughter to Polonius



Polonius
Lord Chamberlain



A troop of travelling players

The Scene

Denmark in the thirteenth century.

Task 3

*"I am thy father's spirit,
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away...."*

(Act I, Scene V)

Who is speaking?

Who might they be speaking to?

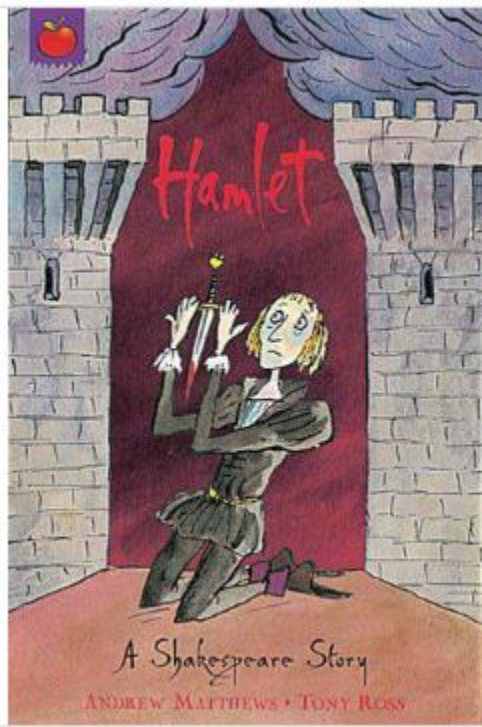
What is a spirit?

How do we know the spirit is tortured?

What might the 'foul crimes' be?

Find and copy a word that means the same as 'to be rid of' or 'to remove'.

How might the spirit be freed?





Hamlet

Many years ago in Denmark there was a prince called Hamlet.

One day Hamlet's father, the king, dies suddenly and Hamlet is very sad.

After this, Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, gets married again very quickly. She marries her husband's brother, Claudius, and Claudius is now the king!

'Aargh! How could you do this to me!'

One night Hamlet's friend, Horatio, tells him that there is a ghost in the castle. It is the ghost of Hamlet's father!

'Claudius killed me with poison! Hamlet, you must punish Claudius for me!'

Hamlet is confused. He doesn't know if he believes the ghost and he doesn't know what to do.

Hamlet now acts very strangely. He is mean and angry, and he upsets his girlfriend, Ophelia.

'Go away! Leave me alone!'

'Oh, he is so mean!'

One day a group of actors come to the castle and Hamlet makes a plan. He asks the actors to change their play. The new play will show a king poisoned like Hamlet's father.

'With this play I will catch the king.'

Shakespeare



When Claudius watches the play he looks very worried and runs away. Hamlet sees him and he knows the truth.

Claudius is very worried about Hamlet now and makes a plan with Ophelia's brother, Laertes.

'You will fight him and we will put poison on the sword and in his drink too.'

Laertes and Hamlet fight. Laertes cuts Hamlet, but in the fight Hamlet takes Laertes' sword and cuts him with it too!

'Here, Hamlet, drink this.'

'No, thank you, Mother. I'm not thirsty.'

'No, don't!'

'It was him! He poisoned us all!'

Finally, Hamlet knows he must stop Claudius.

'Aargh! Have this and this!'

All the royal family are now poisoned and Hamlet tells his friend that there must be a new king.

'Goodbye, my prince.'

Listen to this story <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/short-stories/hamlet>

www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishkids

Lesson 3

Summer 2

Week 2

LO: To retrieve and infer information from a text.

Read p 15 – 25



I laughed then, long and hard, because Horatio had unwittingly provided me with an answer.



Who could have more freedom than a mad prince? If I pretended to be mad, I could say whatever I wished and search for the truth without arousing Claudius's suspicion.

* * *



And so my plan took shape. I wore nothing but black. I wandered through the castle, weeping and sighing, seeking out shadowy places to brood. If

anyone spoke to me, I answered with the first wild nonsense that came into my head, and all the time I watched Claudius, looking for the slightest sign of guilt. I cut myself off from all friends – except Horatio; I told him everything, for I knew he was the only one I could trust.



A rumour began to spread through the castle that grief had turned my wits. So far, my plan was a success, but it is one thing to invent a plan, and another thing to carry it through. The strain of pretending, of cutting myself off from kindness and good company, was almost too great to bear. There were times when I thought I truly had gone mad, when I felt I could no longer carry the burden of what the ghost had told me. If I avenged my father, my mother's new husband would be revealed as a murderer, and her happiness would be shattered; if I did not, my father's soul was doomed to eternal torment.



Worst of all, I was tortured by doubt. What if Claudius were innocent? What if I had been deceived by an evil spirit? Questions went spinning through my mind, like the stars spinning around the Earth.

Then one day, on a bleak afternoon, alone in my room, I drew my dagger and stared at it. The blade



was sharp: if I used it on myself, death would come quickly, and all my doubts and worries would be over – but what then? Would I be sending my soul into an even worse torture?

I weighed the dagger in my hand, balancing the fear of what I must do to avenge my father against the fear of what might follow death. It seemed I lacked both the courage to go on with my life, and the courage to end it.



Hearing a knock at my door, I sheathed the dagger and called out, "Come in!" almost relieved at the interruption.

A woman entered. It was Lady Ophelia, her fair hair shining like a candle-flame, her eyes filled with love and concern.

My heart lifted, then sank. Ophelia and I had loved each other since we were children. Before my father's death, I had been certain that she was the one I would marry – but now everything had changed. There was no room in my heart for love.



"Lord Hamlet?"

Ophelia said.

"My father asks if you will attend the performance of the Royal Players tonight?"



As soon as she mentioned her father, I knew what was happening. Her father was Polonius, the Royal Chamberlain, a meddling fool who loved gossip and secrets. He had sent Ophelia to try and discover why I was acting so strangely. Ophelia would report everything I said to Polonius, and he would report it to Claudius. I was sickened: the castle of Elsinore was a place where brothers murdered brothers, wives forgot their husbands, and fathers used their daughters as spies.

I laughed carelessly, to hide the ache I felt when I looked at Ophelia's beautiful face. "Tell Lord Polonius that I shall be at the play," I said.

Ophelia turned her head, and I saw a tear fall across her cheek.

"My lord," she murmured, "why do you never look at me the way you used to? There was a time when I believed you loved me, and wished us to marry, but now you seem so cold..."



I longed to tell her how much I loved her, and that my coldness was nothing more than acting, but I did not dare.

"You, marry me?" I said roughly. "Marry no one, Ophelia! Wives and husbands are all cheats and liars. It would be better for you to join a convent and become a nun!

At this she ran from the room, her sobs echoing through the corridor, making my heart break.



And then, just as I thought there was no end to my despair, an idea came – first a glimmer, then a gleam, then a burst of light brighter than the sun.

I hurried from my room and went to the Great Hall, where the actors were setting up their stage. I found their leader, a tall man with a look of my uncle about him. After chatting for a few moments, I said casually, "Do you know the play *The Murder of Gonzago*?" "Certainly, my lord!" came the reply.



I handed the man a purse filled with gold. "Act it tonight," I said. "But I want you to make some changes to the story. Listen carefully..."



I meant to turn the play from an entertainment into a trap – a trap to catch a King.

* * *



Task 1: p 15 - 25

1. Replace the words underlined with synonyms: What if I had been deceived by an evil spirit?
2. Can you find an example of a simile on page 20?
3. What effect does it have?
4. The author describes Hamlet's idea as 'a glimmer' then 'a gleam' and finally a 'burst of light'. What does he mean by this?
5. Find and copy three things that Hamlet does on page 16 to convince people he's mad.
6. Who enters the room on page 20? Why?
7. Hamlet warns Ophelia never to marry anyone as wives and husbands are cheaters and liars. True or false?
8. What play does Hamlet request the performers put on?



Task 1:

1. What evidence on there on page 16 to suggest that Horatio is a good friend to Hamlet.
2. Why is Hamlet relieved at the interruption on page 19?
3. What might Hamlet be thinking and feeling on page 20 when Ophelia enters the room?
4. What might Ophelia be thinking and feeling as she runs from the room?
5. Why do you think Hamlet asks for the actors to perform 'The Murder of Gonzago'?
6. Explain what 'grief had turned my wits' (pg 17) means.
7. Can you explain to a partner why Hamlet treats Ophelia so badly?

Task 2:



Read to the end of page 21.

Do you think Ophelia really is a spy?

Read to the bottom of page 23.

What do you think Ophelia will do next?

What changes might Hamlet request be made to the performance of 'The Murder of Gonzago'?

Task 3:

Look at page 17. Hamlet is unsure about what to do.

Summarise the arguments for and against carrying out the ghost's request in a table.

Hamlet should avenge his father	Hamlet should not avenge his father

When Hamlet is holding the dagger and contemplating what to do, he says:

"To be, or not to be, that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles And by opposing end them. To die—to sleep... To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub: For in that sleep of death what dreams may come..."

(Act III, Scene I)

How can you explain what Hamlet is saying?

What might the 'slings and arrows' represent?

What some examples of the 'sea of troubles' Hamlet currently faces can you give?

Make a list of all the problems he is facing.

What is Hamlet frightened of? What is Hamlet worried might happen after death?

Do you think Hamlet is still pretending to be mad?

Work in groups to perform this part of Hamlets soliloquy; perhaps you could perform a line each?

Watch David Tennant's performance of this speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1u8OIUS7BhU>

What tone does Tennant aim for?

