

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

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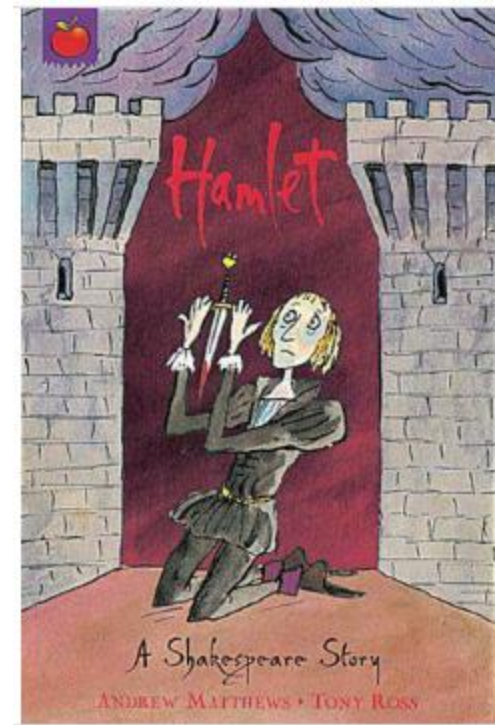
Ages 7-11

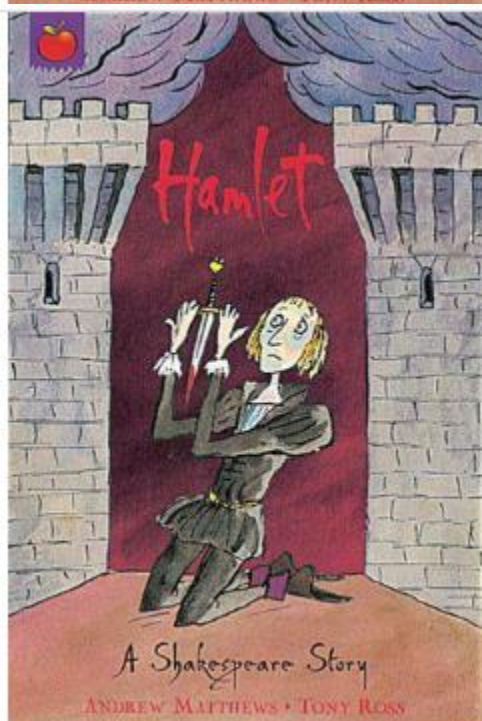
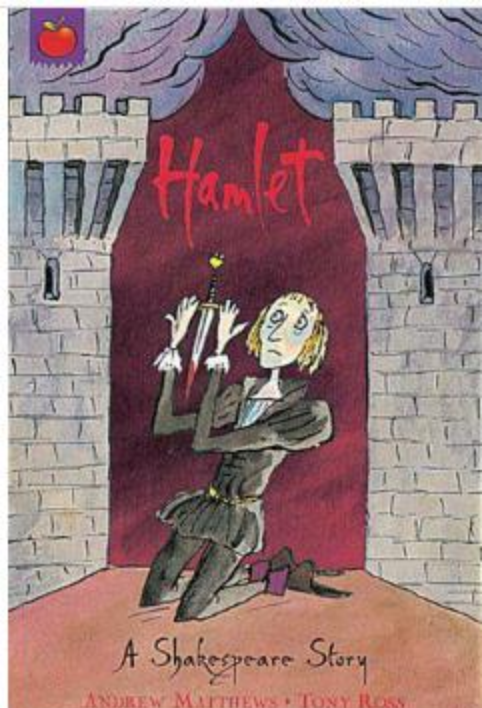
Reasons for selection and synopsis

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>





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.



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 4

Summer 2

Week 2

Thursday 11th June, 2020.

LO: To infer, based on information from a text.

Read p 26 - 30 then p 31 - 37



That evening, while the audience watched the stage, I watched Claudius. At first he showed little interest in the story, preferring to whisper to my mother and kiss her fingers in a way that filled me with loathing – but gradually the skill of the players won his attention.



At the end of the first scene, exactly according to my instructions, the actor playing Duke Gonzago lay down as though asleep and his nephew Lucianus – played by the actor who resembled Claudius – crept up on him and poured poison into his ear.



Even though the light in the hall was dim, I could see the deathly pallor of Claudius's face as he watched this scene. His eyes grew troubled, and he raised a trembling hand towards the stage.



I knew then that I was gazing at the face of a murderer, and that everything the ghost had told me was true.

"No!" Claudius cried out, springing to his feet. "Lights! Bring more lights!"

But all the torches in the world would not light the darkness in his mind. His nerve failed and he hurried from the hall.





Mother made to follow him, but I stopped her at the door. "Do not delay me. I must go to the King!" she said. "Something is wrong."

"And I know what," I told her. "I must talk to you. I will come to your room in an hour. Make sure you are alone, and tell no one of our meeting."

* * *

But I underestimated Claudius's cunning, and the power he had over my mother. When she let me into her room, there was a coldness in her expression and I guessed that she had been speaking to my uncle. Before I could say a word, she said, "Hamlet, you have deeply offended your royal stepfather."

"And you have offended my dead father," I replied.

Mother frowned at me, puzzled. "What do you mean?" she demanded.



"You offended him the day you abandoned your mourning robes in exchange for a wedding gown," I said. "The day you married a liar and a murderer!"

"I won't listen!" Mother shouted. She began to cover her ears with her hands and I caught hold of her wrists to prevent

her – she had to hear the truth. Mother

screamed in alarm, and then

I heard a voice from behind

the drawn curtains at her

window, calling out, "Help!

Murder!"



I was certain it was Claudius – who else would skulk and spy in my mother's bedroom? I drew my sword and plunged it into the curtain, filled with fierce joy that my father was avenged at last...



But it was the body of Lord Polonius that tumbled into the room; I had killed an innocent man.



"You meddling old fool!" I groaned.

"What were you doing there?"

"Following my orders," said a voice.

I turned and saw Claudius in the doorway, with two armed guards. A triumphant light glinted in his eyes. "I was afraid you might harm your mother if you were alone with her," Claudius went on.

"Your madness has made you violent, Hamlet. You must leave Denmark tonight. I shall send you to friends in England, who will care for you until you are back in your right mind. Guards, take the Prince away!"



Neither my mother nor the guards saw the mocking smile that flickered on his lips, but as soon as I saw it, I knew that Claudius intended me never to return from England. I would be imprisoned, and then secretly murdered.



While I had been trying to trap my uncle, he had been setting a trap for me, and now it had snapped shut.

* * *

LO: To infer, based on information from a text.

Task 1: p 26 - 30

- 1) Find and copy a word on page 27 that means the same as 'looks like'.
- 2) Replace the words in bold with synonyms: Even though the light in the hall was **dim**, I could see the **deathly pallor** of Claudius's face as he **watched** the scene.
- 3) On page 30, Gertrude says, "Do not delay me!" What does this mean?
- 4) How could you use the word delay in a sentence of your own?



- 5) Give two examples that show Claudius was initially uninterested in the play.
- 6) Hamlet says he will come to his mother's room in two hours. True or false?



Task 1:

- 1) What might Claudius be thinking and feeling when Lucianus pours poison in his uncle's ear on page 27?
- 2) Why does Claudius call out, "Bring more lights!" on page 29?
- 3) What might Gertrude be thinking and feeling as Claudius runs from the hall?
- 4) Hamlet says, "The play's the thing Wherein I catch the conscience of the King." (Act II, Scene I)

What does he mean? Look at pages 26 and 27.



- 5) Explain how the performance on stage is mirroring the events that led to the death of Hamlet's father.

Look at page 30.

- 6) Why doesn't Hamlet tell his mother what is wrong? Why wait an hour?

Task 2

Read to the end of page 29.

What do you think Claudius will do next?

Where might he be going? Read to the end of page 30.

What might happen next when Hamlet meets with his mother?

How might the story have changed if Claudius had not run out of the hall and instead remained watching the performance?



Task 3

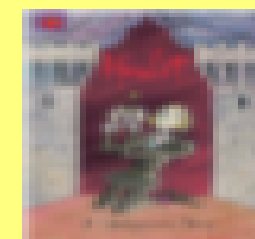
Compare and contrast Claudius's behaviour at the beginning of the play with his behaviour on page 29.

Summarise in three sentences what happens during the play in the hall.

LO: To infer, based on information from a text.

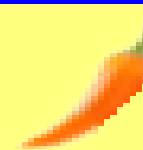
Task 1: p 31 - 37

- 1) Find and copy a word on page 32 that means the same as 'stop'.
- 2) Replace the words in bold with synonyms: I was certain it was Claudius – who else would skulk and spy in my mother's bedroom?
- 3) Why does Gertrude scream in alarm on page 32?
- 4) Hamlet accidentally kills Laertes, who is hiding behind his mother's bedroom curtain. True or false?
- 5) Hamlet is sent to England by Claudius. True or false?



Task 1:

- 1) Read up to page 31. How has Gertrude offended Hamlet's dead father?
- 2) What might Gertrude be thinking and feeling when Hamlet tells her she has married a murderer?
- 3) What does the verb 'groaned' imply about Hamlet is feeling on page 34?
- 4) What might Claudius be thinking and feeling when he enters the room on page 34?
- 5) Do you think that Hamlet's mother is right when she says, "You have deeply offended your royal stepfather"? Explain.
- 6) Explain what the author means by 'a triumphant light glinted in his eyes' (pg 34).
- 7) Explain why Claudius has a 'mocking smile' on his lips on page 36.



Task 2:

Read to the bottom of page 32.

Who do you think is behind the curtains?

Read to the end of page 34.

What do you think will happen to Hamlet?

Read to the end of page 37.

Do you think Hamlet will escape?

Task 3:

Summarise

Re-write these events in the correct order:

- Claudius enters the room and banishes Hamlet to England.
- He accuses her husband of murder and he grabs her wrists to force her to listen.
- Hamlet hears a voice behind the curtain and is convinced it is Claudius spying on him.
- Hamlet goes to speak to his mother in her bedroom.
- He plunges his sword into the curtain but kills Polonius.

