

2017–2018 SEASON

WU?@therep

HAMLET

by William Shakespeare

Directed by Paul Mason Barnes

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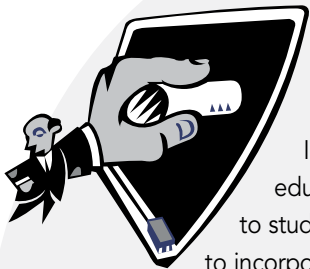


the 11

At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some things are worth slowing down

for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together WU? @ THE REP—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (A/S/L), a plot summary (FYI), biographical information (F2F), historical context (B4U), and other bits and pieces (HTH). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means IRL, anyway.

CU@therep!



The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials accessible to students and easy for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, www.repstl.org, for additional information including activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information. Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom.

NEATO!

As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

HOW TO BE THE BEST AUDIENCE EVER!

TAKE YOUR SEAT

An usher will seat your class as a group, and often we have a full house with no seats to spare, so be sure to stick with your school until you have been shown your section in the theatre.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Before the performance begins, be sure to turn off your cell phone and watch alarms. If you need to talk or text during intermission, don't forget to click off before the show resumes.

BREAK TIME

This performance includes an intermission, at which time you can visit the restrooms in the lobby. Intermission is only 15 minutes though, so hurry back to your seat.

SNACK TIME

There is no food or drink permitted inside the theatre, so make sure you finish your snacks in the lobby before you enter the house.

NOW HEAR THIS

Just as you can see and hear the actors, they can see and hear you. Any talking, even whispering, can be heard by those around you and those onstage, so please wait until the show is over to chat.

NO PAPARAZZI PLEASE

The theatre is a camera-free zone. Flash photography interrupts the action onstage and is prohibited by Actors' Equity Association rules. You can sneak a peek at production photos on The Rep's website at repstl.org.

TAKE A BOW

Let the actors know you respect their work by responding to the curtain call at the end of the performance. Show your appreciation for a job well done through applause.

THANKS FOR BEING A GREAT AUDIENCE!

REP EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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A/S/L

CLAUDIUS, the newly crowned King of Denmark following his brother's untimely death, struggles to maintain peace in the kingdom while hiding the fact that he murdered the former king.

The son of the late king, **PRINCE HAMLET OF DENMARK**, seeks revenge for his father's murder. He feels betrayed by his mother for her hasty remarriage to his uncle.

QUEEN GERTRUDE, Hamlet's mother, has married her late-husband's brother, much to the disgust of her son.

The Lord Chamberlain, **POLONIUS**, is concerned that Hamlet wishes to take away his daughter's virtue. He is a well-spoken man, but a weak strategist.

OPHELIA, the innocent and virtuous daughter of Polonius, has caught the

attention of Prince Hamlet, much to the dismay of her father and brother.

Ophelia's brother, **LAERTES**, is a scholar in France who seeks revenge against those who have wronged his family. He was once Prince Hamlet's childhood friend.

THE GHOST OF KING HAMLET appears to reveal the truth about the late king's death, causing Hamlet to enact his plot for revenge.

HORATIO is a fellow scholar and friend to Hamlet who remains loyal throughout the prince's plot for revenge.

FORTINBRAS, the young Prince of Norway, has declared war on Denmark as revenge for his father's death at the hand of the late-King Hamlet many years before.



ADOPTION TRIED: A lasting friendship

APOPLEX'D: Paralyzed

BODKIN: A dagger

BUZZERS: Gossipers

COZENAGE: Treachery

DOWN GYVED: Fallen about his ankles

FAIN: Wish

FISHMONGER: A dealer in fish, or someone who sells women

GIB: A male cat

HARBINGERS: Persons or things that come before to announce or give an indication of what follows

JOWLS: Bumps

MOUNTEBANK: Quack doctor

SCULLION: A servant doing the rough, dirty work in a kitchen

TO THE MANNER BORN: Destined or accustomed to it since birth

TRUEPENNY: Honest fellow

WORMWOOD: Bitterness

H/H

Crossword answers: 1. England 2. Poison 3. Aristotle 4. Elsinore 5. Yorick 6. Ophelia 7. Gertrude 8. Hamnet 9. France 10. Globe



SPOILER ALERT!

This synopsis contains spoilers about the story of the show. If you wish to be completely surprised by what you see on stage, you may want to wait until after the play to read this article.



Benedict Cumberbatch in the London Barbican's 2015 production of Hamlet. Photo Courtesy of BBC News.

As the play begins, the nation of Denmark finds itself in a state of unrest. King Hamlet has died suddenly, and his brother, Claudius, has ascended to the throne. There is fear of an invasion from Norway, led by the young Prince Fortinbras, who is seeking revenge for his father's death at the hand of the late King Hamlet many years ago. In order to maintain as much order as possible in Denmark, Claudius has quickly wed his brother's wife, Queen Gertrude, much to the chagrin of her son, Prince Hamlet.

While on guard duty, soldiers Marcellus and Barnardo explain to Horatio, a scholar and friend of Prince Hamlet, that they have seen a strange sight the previous two nights: the ghost of the late King Hamlet. He does not believe them until the Ghost appears on the battlements. Horatio questions the apparition, but it refuses to speak and leaves as the rooster crows. Horatio decides that they will tell Prince Hamlet what they have seen.

King Claudius gathers the court at Elsinore and thanks them for supporting the sudden marriage for him and Queen Gertrude in such difficult times. He then addresses Prince Hamlet, who is the only one not celebrating the

recent marriage, as he is still mourning his father. Both Gertrude and Claudius plead with Hamlet to be happy, but when left alone, Hamlet mourns the loss of his father and speaks unkindly about his mother, calling into question her love for the late king. Horatio approaches Hamlet to explain what he has seen on the battlements and Hamlet agrees to accompany him that night in order to learn the truth about this illusion.

Elsewhere in the kingdom, Laertes and Ophelia, the children of the king's advisor Polonius, are saying goodbye to one another, as Laertes has been granted permission to return to France. Laertes warns his sister not to get too close to Hamlet, who has expressed interest in her, as he will do nothing more than take her virtue and leave her with nothing. Polonius enters and offers wise advice to Laertes, who then departs. Polonius questions Ophelia and, upon learning of Hamlet's affections, gives her the same warning as Laertes. She agrees to refuse Hamlet's affections.

That night, Hamlet, Horatio and Marcellus wait for the ghost on the battlements. When it appears, it wishes to speak with Hamlet alone.

SPOILER ALERT!

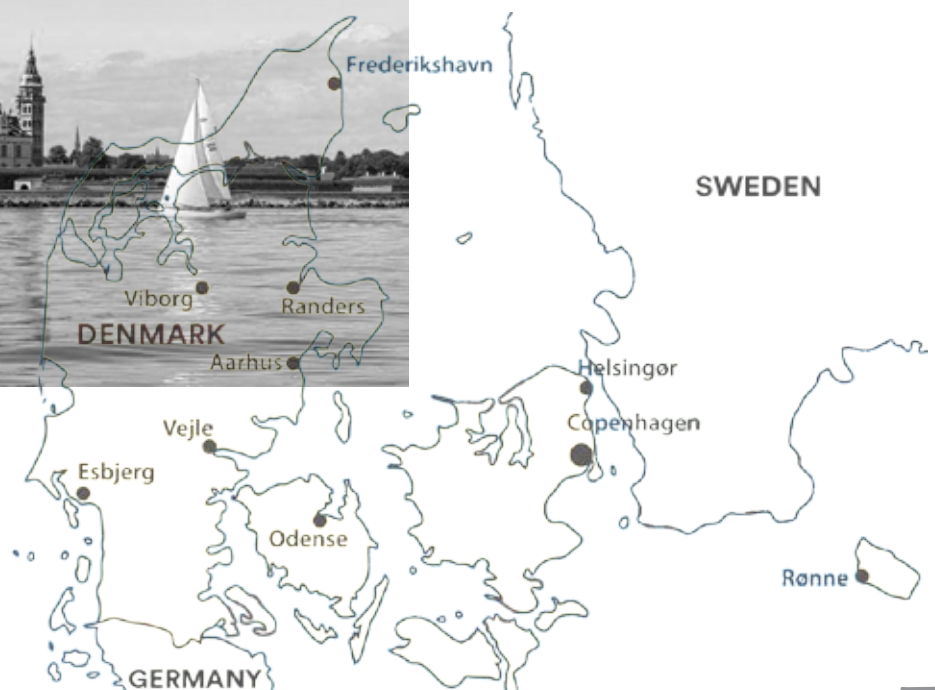
This synopsis contains spoilers about the story of the show. If you wish to be completely surprised by what you see on stage, you may want to wait until after the play to read this article.

Though Horatio and Marcellus advise against it, Hamlet agrees to speak with the ghost. The ghost explains that he was murdered by Claudius while sleeping in the garden, and Hamlet must now take revenge. When Horatio and Marcellus arrive, Hamlet tells them that he plans to act crazy in order to find out more information about the ghost's claim. Horatio and Marcellus are sworn to secrecy about seeing the ghost and Hamlet's plan.

Polonius sends his man, Reynaldo, to Paris to spy on Laertes. Ophelia enters, claiming that Hamlet had come to her looking crazed and disheveled, and that his actions terrified her. Polonius assumes that Hamlet is mad with love for her and plans to tell Claudius. Claudius, along with Gertrude, have approached Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two of Hamlet's friends, to keep an eye on the Prince and assist them in helping Hamlet move on from his father's death. Polonius arrives and shares a love letter that Hamlet wrote to Ophelia, claiming that her refusals are what have driven him mad. They all agree to spy on the two lovers to see if this is the true cause.

When Hamlet approaches, Gertrude and Claudius leave. Polonius and Hamlet have a strange conversation, during which Hamlet seems not to know Polonius. Polonius leaves and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive. After questioning them, Hamlet learns that they were sent by Claudius and Gertrude. He also learns that there is a theatre troupe coming to the castle. When they arrive, Hamlet asks them to demonstrate their talents and requests that they perform before the court the following night. Hamlet will use the play to judge his uncle's guilt, as the plot involves a murder of a man by his brother.

The next day, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are reporting Hamlet's behavior to Claudius and Gertrude, describing the prince's excitement for the play that evening. When they leave, Claudius dismisses Gertrude as well. He and Polonius plan to watch as Hamlet and Ophelia interact to determine if she is the cause of Hamlet's wild behavior. Prince Hamlet arrives, contemplating the benefits of death over the woes of life, and the two talk. He wants to know if Ophelia is honest and good, and he tells her that he never loved her and that all men are sinners.



DID YOU KNOW

Elsinore—English for Helsingør—is a real place in Denmark. You can explore Hamlet's home by visiting Kronborg Castle, a Unesco World Heritage Site.



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Claudius returns after Hamlet exits and decides that since Hamlet is not crazy with love, he should be sent to England for his own good. Polonius suggests allowing Hamlet to speak to his mother and he, Polonius, will listen in secret to gain more information.

Hamlet gives the actors direction before their performance for the court, telling them to play the scene as realistically as possible without overindulging. He also asks Horatio to study the king during the performance so that he may get a second opinion of him. When the murder occurs in the play, Claudius rises and leaves.

After the intermission, Hamlet and Horatio discuss Claudius's reaction to the scene and Hamlet is convinced that Claudius is guilty of murdering his father. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive to tell Hamlet that his mother wishes to speak with him. Hamlet gets upset with them, understanding that they are spying on him for his mother and the king, and

likenes himself to an instrument being played. He agrees to speak with his mother.

Claudius orders Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to accompany Hamlet to England now that his madness seems to be strengthening and the people of Denmark may be in danger because of it. Claudius, feeling guilty, is left alone to pray. Hamlet finds him, and considers killing him, but cannot; if Hamlet killed Claudius while he was in prayer, his soul would be saved, which is not the revenge murder that Hamlet feels his father deserves.

When Hamlet speaks to his mother, he is harsh and accusing. She feels threatened and calls for help. Polonius, who is hiding in the room, calls out as well. Hamlet, thinking that it is Claudius, stabs him with his sword. He then proceeds to tell his mother that Claudius murdered King Hamlet, which distresses her greatly. The ghost of King Hamlet visits, unseen by Gertrude, to remind Hamlet of his promise to kill Claudius.

COSTUME DESIGN

Dorothy Marshall Englis



OPHELIA



GERTRUDE

Before leaving with the body of Polonius, Hamlet advises his mother to keep her distance from Claudius, who arrives in her chambers following Hamlet's exit. Gertrude tells him that Hamlet has murdered Polonius and Claudius orders Hamlet to England immediately.

When Hamlet is brought before Claudius and questioned, he answers in riddles. Claudius tells Hamlet that he is being sent to England, and Hamlet exits. The king reveals to the audience that he hopes the King of England will murder Hamlet. Away from the castle, Prince Fortinbras of Norway has entered Denmark and is headed towards Elsinore. He sends a captain ahead of him to greet King Claudius. Fortinbras exits, and Hamlet enters on his way to England. He questions the captain, who claims Norway is moving against Poland. When Hamlet is left alone, he speaks of how frustrated he is that he has not killed Claudius to avenge his father and vows to act.

Back at Elsinore, Ophelia is mourning the loss of her father. Claudius and Gertrude are concerned for her, but are interrupted when Laertes returns to the castle demanding to know of his father. He is made even more upset when he sees Ophelia's state. Claudius explains how Polonius died, and Laertes swears revenge. Hamlet sends a letter stating that he plans to return to Elsinore. Claudius, with Laertes' help, makes a plan to murder Hamlet by engaging him in a fight and killing him with a poisoned weapon or drink. Gertrude enters and reveals that Ophelia has drowned.

The next day, two gravediggers prepare a grave for Ophelia's funeral. One exits and Hamlet and Horatio enter and speak with the remaining gravedigger. As the funeral party emerges, Hamlet discovers that it is Ophelia's funeral. Hamlet reveals himself in grief and he and Laertes fight. When alone, Hamlet reveals to Horatio that he was to be killed on the ship to England, a murder ordered by Claudius. Osric, a servant, enters and tells Hamlet that Claudius has wagered a bet for a fight against Hamlet and Laertes. Hamlet accepts the challenge, even though Horatio advises against it.

The match is set and the entire court is attending. Hamlet gets two hits on Laertes, and, during a pause, Gertrude drinks from a poisoned cup intended for Hamlet. As the match begins again, Laertes wounds Hamlet. Hamlet gets ahold of Laertes' rapier and wounds Laertes. Gertrude dies from the poisoned drink. When Claudius's plan is revealed, Hamlet wounds him with the poisoned rapier, killing him. Laertes dies, and soon after, Hamlet dies as well. Prince Fortinbras of Norway enters the castle and discovers the massacre. As one of few survivors, Horatio vows to share the details of what has happened in Denmark.



B4

TOTALLY QUOTABLE

Even if you have never read *Hamlet* before or seen a film version or live performance of the play, there is a good chance that you have heard of some of the lines of dialogue from Shakespeare's most quoted work. Here are some modern, everyday phrases that owe their popularity to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

"Pure as snow" – Hamlet uses this phrase when warning Ophelia about the harsh realities of the world and advising her to live in a convent. You may have used it to describe someone or something untouched and somewhat otherworldly.

"You've got to be cruel to be kind" – Hamlet explains to his mother that his actions, seemingly cruel, are really for the good of everyone. Think "for the greater good" and other concepts that rely on terrible deeds for better rewards.

"Brevity is the soul of wit" – Although Polonius is being anything but brief when he states this – Shakespeare loves his irony – the phrase needs little explanation. Those who are truly witty need few words to make themselves plain.

"Frailty, thy name is woman" – Harsh? Definitely. Timeless? Apparently.

"Mind's eye" – While not exactly one of his invented phrases, Shakespeare popularized it by using it in *Hamlet*.

"Makes your hair stand on end" – You've definitely used this one to describe something frightening. Who knew you had something in common with a Ghost King.

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be" – A direct quote from Polonius about financial matters. How parental.

"Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" – Doesn't matter where you are and how bad things get, you've probably compared a situation to Denmark following the death of King Hamlet at the hands of his brother.

"What a piece of work is man" – Whether you're describing man specifically or just something in general, you've probably claimed something was a "piece of work" before.

"Murder most foul" – Spend time describing gruesome homicides, do you? Well, you're quoting Shakespeare when you do.

"To thine own self be true" – While you probably don't repeat this phrase every day in casual conversation, you've probably heard it before, which is impressive for a phrase from the early 1600s.

"Get thee to a nunnery" – Not something you'd probably say to someone you're fond of, but definitely from *Hamlet*.

"The lady doth protest too much, methinks" – Often misquoted, it is still a fun *Hamlet* phrase to throw out to those people who spend all their time complaining.

"Mortal coil" – It refers to the strife and suffering of the world, so of course it's found in *Hamlet*.

"To be or not to be: that is the question" – You've definitely heard this one, and you've probably reworked it to suit a specific situation. It's arguably the most famous line in the history of famous lines. Thanks for that one, Shakespeare!

Be on the lookout for more familiar phrases from *Hamlet* that you hear often and add them to the list. You'll sound like a Shakespearean scholar in no time at all!



#IWOKEUPLIKETHIS

SHAKESPEARE: THE WORLD'S MOST PRODUCED PLAYWRIGHT

William Shakespeare wrote approximately 38 plays, 154 sonnets, was an actor in Elizabethan theatre, and is often considered the **greatest writer in the English language**. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than the plays of any other playwright, making him the most produced playwright in history.

Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, a trade center at the heart of England. His father, John Shakespeare, was a landowner who raised sheep and was a well-respected guild member. Although records of his early life are few and far between, it is probable that Shakespeare attended grammar school in Stratford. There, he would have learned Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and German, as well as read the classics and the works of Aristotle and others.

In 1582, Shakespeare married Ann Hathaway and became a father less than nine months later, to a daughter, Susanna. Before leaving for London, Shakespeare had two additional children, Hamnet and Judith, with Hathaway. Around 1585/1586, Shakespeare joined a theatre company and left his family behind in Stratford-upon-Avon. He started out as an

actor, but quickly moved on to writing for theatre. He became a shareholder in Lord Chamberlain's Men, a popular London acting company, in 1595. In 1599, Shakespeare helped to construct the Globe Theatre, which opened on Bankside London and became a popular entertainment destination for many different classes of people. Later, he helped develop the Blackfriars Theatre, one of the first indoor theatres.

Shakespeare was involved in the English Renaissance, a cultural and artistic movement during which Greek and Roman classics were being translated and printed, leading to a burst of artistic innovation. He wrote about all classes of people, in both prose and poetry—often iambic Pentameter, with lines containing stressed and unstressed syllables. His plays were popular with both the lower classes and the nobility.

Shakespeare retired to Stratford around 1613 and lived there until his death in 1616. Following his death, his works were published in the First Folio, allowing him to become one of the most widely-respected and produced playwrights the world has ever known.

RBT

REVENGE: A MURDEROUS AFFAIR

Hamlet is a revenge tragedy, and, as the name suggests, the characters are obsessed with getting their revenge. It is not only Hamlet that is looking for vengeance: both Prince Fortinbras of Norway and Laertes have dead fathers who they feel were unjustly murdered and seek revenge in their names. All three of these young men are vengeful under different circumstances as well, which allows Shakespeare to explore the theme broadly. King Fortinbras was killed in battle, so it is difficult to call it a murder like the other two examples in the play. Then you have Hamlet, who is only hearing about the murder of his father from his father's ghost, which not everyone can see, making it a weak foundation for a revenge murder. Finally, Laertes is absolutely certain of his father's murder, as there were witnesses who can speak to the events surrounding it. Shakespeare varies the situation, motivation, support structure and plan of action for all three revenge seekers in order to deeply address the issue. **How does Shakespeare individually feel about each of these revenge plots? How can you tell? How does Shakespeare seem to feel about revenge in general?**

A MIRROR TO NATURE: PERFORMANCE AS OBSERVATION

About halfway through *Hamlet*, the title character enlists a performance troupe to help him confirm the guilt of his uncle in the murder of his father. First, he assigns them a play plotted to parallel the murder according to his father's ghost, hoping that the scene will spur his uncle to

reveal his guilt. Additionally, he directs the players to play the scene as realistically as possible. He warns them against embellishing or overacting, and he advises them to keep their movements natural in order to create the best reflection of real life. **Why does Shakespeare allow Hamlet to spend so much time on the reality of performance? Looking outside of the play, do you think Shakespeare is commenting on theatre and performance in general? Why or why not? When watching the performance, pay close attention to how the actors perform their roles. Are they more realistic or more exaggerated/performative?**

ANTI-ARISTOTLE: THE INACTIVE CHARACTER

The leading dramatic theory during the Elizabethan Era (1558-1603), when Shakespeare lived and worked, would have been Aristotle's *Poetics*, published around 335 BC. Shakespeare's contemporaries would have taken their cues from this text, which clearly stated that in drama, action was more important than character. However, in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare disregards this practice; in fact, he reverses it. Hamlet is actually an inactive character for much of the play, and Shakespeare uses his ample stage time to instead study the psychology of his main character. **Look for moments in the play where the action is halted in favor of character development. What are your thoughts on these moments? Does the play need them? What would the play be like without them?**

IRL

WARNING: CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE

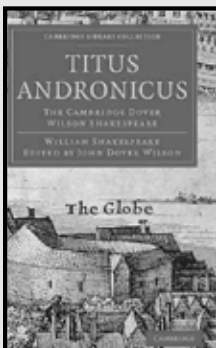
While the stakes are high and the days are dark in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the conflicts and explorations into human psychology are as relevant and relatable today as they ever have been. Not every young individual faces the murder of their father at the hand of their uncle, or the marriage of their mother to father's brother/murderer, but it is safe to say that almost every individual has faced or will face a high-pressure situation in which they must make a choice to act or not to act (my, what a question!).

At its most basic level, *Hamlet* is about a young man who has a massive task placed on his shoulders, with a clear expectation from him.

Yet, he struggles to complete the task, constantly guessing the right move to make and always wanting more information in order to make a better decision. So, maybe you haven't had to kill your father's murderer, but surely you've made a hard choice at some point. **What steps did you take to make your decision? Looking back on it, would you have done anything differently?**

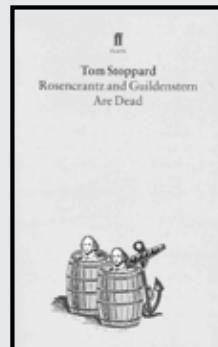
Think specifically about Hamlet's task: do you agree with the choices he made? In that situation, would you have taken a more inactive role, like Hamlet, or more active role, like Laertes? Is there a right or wrong path to take?

BTW



Titus Andronicus
by William Shakespeare

Another of The Bard's revenge tragedies, this play tells the story of a Roman general engaged in a revenge cycle with the Queen of the Goths.



Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead
by Tom Stoppard

The events from *Hamlet* are retold from the perspective of two supporting characters in this 1966 absurdly tragicomic play.

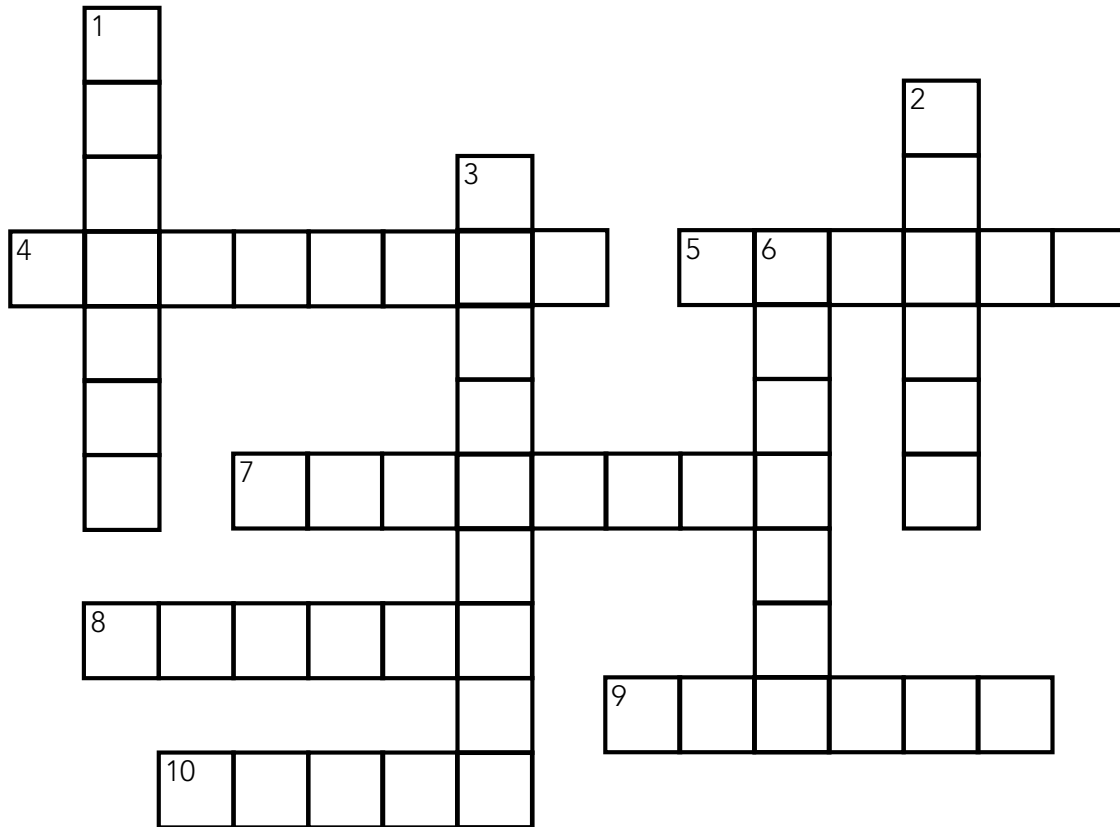


The Dead Fathers Club
by Matt Haig

This is a modern retelling of *Hamlet* in which 11-year-old Phillip is visited by his father's ghost seeking revenge against his murderer.

JUST FOR FUN

Complete the crossword puzzle using clues found in the play and study guide.



ACROSS

4. This is the kingdom in which the play takes place
5. The skull of this jester prompts Hamlet to consider death
7. This character inadvertently drinks poison meant for Hamlet
8. Shakespeare's son, who had a name very similar to the title of this play
9. Laertes wishes to leave and return to this country
10. The name of the theatre Shakespeare ran in London

DOWN

1. Claudius thinks sending Hamlet to this country might solve all his problems
2. King Hamlet was murdered by this method
3. This philosopher wrote *Poetics*, a text Shakespeare would have studied
6. Hamlet speaks to two gravediggers, who are preparing for this person's funeral