

ACT II SCENE I. A room in Polonius's house.

Encompassment- surrounding Sullies- stains
Incontinency- the lack of Assays- attacks
control over one's desires Bias- lies, indirection
Wherefore- why Purport- meaning
Fetch- trap Perusal- study
Warrant- allowable Reclaim- to reform

[Enter Polonius and Reynaldo.]

POLONIUS

Give him this money and these notes,
Reynaldo.

REYNALDO

I will, my lord.

POLONIUS

You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before You visit him, to make inquiry
Of his behaviour.

REYNALDO

My lord, I did intend it.

POLONIUS

Marry, well said; very well said. Look you, sir,
Enquire me first what Danskers are in Paris;
And how, and who, what means, and where they
keep,
What company, at what expense; and finding,
By this encompassment and drift of question,
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it:
Take you, as 'twere, some distant knowledge of
him;
As thus, 'I know his father and his friends,
And in part him: do you mark this, Reynaldo?

REYNALDO

Ay, very well, my lord.

POLONIUS

'And in part him: but,' you may say, 'not well:
But if't be he I mean, he's very wild;
Addicted so and so;' and there put on him
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank
As may dishonour him; take heed of that;
But, sir, such wanton, wild, and usual slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.

REYNALDO

As gaming, my lord.

POLONIUS

Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling,
Drabbing: you may go so far.

REYNALDO

My lord, that would dishonour him.

POLONIUS

Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge.
You must not put another scandal on him,
That he is open to incontinency;
That's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so
quaintly

To whom is Polonius sending Reynaldo with money and notes?

[Danskers- Danes.]

A. What does daddy Polonius want to find out?

B. What "trick" is Reynaldo to use to discover the information?

[drabbing- whoring.]

C. What sort of vices does Polonius believe are common to young men?

That they may seem the taints of liberty;
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind;
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,
Of general assault.

REYNALDO

But, my good lord,

POLONIUS

Wherefore should you do this?

REYNALDO

Ay, my lord,
I would know that.

POLONIUS

Marry, sir, here's my drift;
And I believe it is a fetch of warrant:
You laying these slight sullies on my son
As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' the working,
Mark you,
Your party in converse, him you would sound,
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assur'd
He closes with you in this consequence;
'Good sir,' or so; or 'friend,' or 'gentleman'!
According to the phrase or the addition
Of man and country.

REYNALDO

Very good, my lord.

POLONIUS

And then, sir, does he this, he does! What was I
about to say?!
By the mass, I was about to say something: Where
did I leave?

REYNALDO

At 'closes in the consequence,' at 'friend or so,' and
gentleman.'

POLONIUS

At! closes in the consequence'! ay, marry!
He closes with you thus: 'I know the gentleman;
I saw him yesterday, or t'other day,
Or then, or then; with such, or such; and, as you
say,
There was he gaming; there o'ertook in's rouse;
There falling out at tennis': or perchance,
'I saw him enter such a house of sale,'!
Videlicet, a brothel, or so forth.
See you now;
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth:
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlances, and with assays of bias,
By indirections find directions out:
So, by my former lecture and advice,
Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?

REYNALDO

My lord, I have.

POLONIUS

God b' wi' you, fare you well.

D. What is Reynaldo worried about?

[prenominate- before named.]

A. Not content with telling Reynaldo the general idea, what is
Polonius doing here?

B. What does this slip make Polonius look like?

[videlicet- to wit, namely.]

[windlace- a roundabout course.]

REYNALDO

Good my lord!

POLONIUS

Observe his inclination in yourself.

REYNALDO

I shall, my lord.

POLONIUS

And let him ply his music.

REYNALDO

Well, my lord.

POLONIUS

Farewell!

[Exit Reynaldo.]

[Enter Ophelia.]

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?

OPHELIA

Alas, my lord, I have been so affrighted!

POLONIUS

With what, i' the name of God?

OPHELIA

My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd;
No hat upon his head; his stockings foul'd,
Ungart' red, and down-gyved to his ankle;
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell

To speak of horrors, he comes before me.

POLONIUS

Mad for thy love?

OPHELIA

My lord, I do not know;

But truly I do fear it.

POLONIUS

What said he?

OPHELIA

He took me by the wrist, and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm;
And with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so;
At last, a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being: that done, he lets me go:
And, with his head over his shoulder turn'd
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes;
For out o' doors he went without their help,
And to the last bended their light on me.

POLONIUS

Come, go with me: I will go seek the king.
This is the very ecstasy of love;
Whose violent property fordoes itself,
And leads the will to desperate undertakings,

[unbraced- unbuttoned.]

[down-gyved- rolled down.]

What reason do we readers have for thinking that Hamlet's behavior might be an act?

C. Imagine the actions Ophelia describes here, and then comment on the feelings Hamlet might be portraying.

D. Again, Polonius is worried. What about this time?

As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry,
What, have you given him any hard words of late?

OPHELIA

No, my good lord; but, as you did command,
I did repel his letters and denied
His access to me.

POLONIUS

That hath made him mad.
I am sorry that with better heed and judgment
I had not quoted him: I fear'd he did but trifle,
And meant to wreck thee; but beshrew my jealousy!
It seems it as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions
As it is common for the younger sort
To lack discretion. Come, go we to the king:
This must be known; which, being kept close,
might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.
[Exeunt.]

ACT II SCENE II. A room in the Castle.

Entreat- ask, beg	Expostulate- speak at length
Humour- disposition	Perpend- attend
Glean- gather	Surmise- imagine
Bent- direction, purpose	Solicitations- requests
Distemper- illness	Arras- drapes
Sift- scrutinize	<u>Carrion- dead flesh</u>
Levies- armies	Potently- strongly
Assay- assault, test	MORE VOCAB LATER

[Enter King, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and
Attendants.]

CLAUDIUS

Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!
Moreover that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so I call it,
Since nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from the understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of: I entreat you both
That, being of so young days brought up with him,
And since so neighbour'd to his youth and humour,
That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court
Some little time: so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather,
So much as from occasion you may glean,
Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,
That, open'd, lies within our remedy.

GERTRUDE

Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you,
And sure I am two men there are not living
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you
To show us so much gentry and good-will

A. What does Polonius admit here, and what generalization
about older people does he make?

[beshrew- curse.]

[This huge scene has many parts. You can, however, conceive
of it as divided into three logical sections. In the first, Claudius
deals with Fortinbras and makes plans to discover the source of
Hamlet's "madness." In the second section, we see the plans in
action as Polonius and then Rosencrantz and Guildenstern probe
Hamlet. The third section begins with the actors' entrance. In
this last section Hamlet confronts his feelings and begins a plan
to probe Claudius. Hence, the scene has a kind of symmetry.]

B. What recent event does Claudius not mention?

[vouchsafe- agree to.]

C. What belief about the cause of Hamlet's "transformation"
has Claudius twice mentioned in this speech?

[gentry- good manners.]

As to expend your time with us awhile,
For the supply and profit of our hope,
Your visitation shall receive such thanks
As fits a king's remembrance.

ROSENCRANTZ

Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.

GULDENSTERN

We both obey,
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent,
To lay our service freely at your feet,
To be commanded.

CLAUDIUS

Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

GERTRUDE

Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz:
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too-much-changed son. Go, some of you,
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.

GULDENSTERN

Heavens make our presence and our practices
Pleasant and helpful to him!

GERTRUDE

Ay, amen!
[Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and some
Attendants].

[Enter Polonius.]

POLONIUS

Th' ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully return'd.

CLAUDIUS

Thou still hast been the father of good news.

POLONIUS

Have I, my lord? Assure you, my good liege,
I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,
Both to my God and to my gracious king:
And I do think, or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
As it hath us'd to do, that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

CLAUDIUS

O, speak of that; that do I long to hear.

POLONIUS

Give first admittance to the ambassadors;
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.

CLAUDIUS

Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.
[Exit Polonius.]

He tells me, my sweet queen, he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

GERTRUDE

I doubt it is no other but the main,
His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage.

D. By using "profit" and "thanks" what is Gertrude telling R & G that they can expect if they are successful?

What job do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern take on?

A. How does Polonius praise himself while suggesting that he knows the cause of Hamlet's lunacy?

B. How does this comment distinguish Gertrude's understanding from Claudius's?

CLAUDIUS

Well, we shall sift him.

[Enter Polonius, with Voltimand and Cornelius.]

Welcome, my good friends!

Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?

VOLTIMAND

Most fair return of greetings and desires.
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies; which to him appear'd
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack;
But, better look'd into, he truly found
It was against your highness; whereat griev'd,
That so his sickness, age, and impotence
Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests
On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys;
Receives rebuke from Norway; and, in fine,
Makes vow before his uncle never more
To give th' assay of arms against your majesty.
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee;
And his commission to employ those soldiers,
So levied as before, against the Polack:
With an entreaty, herein further shown,
[Gives a paper.]
That it might please you to give quiet pass
Through your dominions for this enterprise,
On such regards of safety and allowance
As therein are set down.

CLAUDIUS

It likes us well;
And at our more consider'd time we'll read,
Answer, and think upon this business.
Meantime we thank you for your well-took labour:
Go to your rest; at night we'll feast together:
Most welcome home!

[Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius.]

POLONIUS

This business is well ended.
My liege, and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night is night, and time is time.
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief: your noble son is mad:
Mad call I it; for to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

GERTRUDE

More matter, with less art.

POLONIUS

Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity;
And pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure;

[Norway- the king of Norway.]

C. What reward does Fortinbras receive for being a good boy and obeying his uncle?

D. What is Claudius happy to grant in exchange for the end of hostilities?

A. Oh, dear. Polonius is at it again. Why do you think he talks like this?

But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him then: and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect;
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause:
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.
Perpend.

I have a daughter, have whilst she is mine,
Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this: now gather, and surmise.

[Reads.]

'To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most
beautified Ophelia,'

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a
vile phrase: but you shall hear. Thus:

[Reads.]

'In her excellent white bosom, these, &c.'

GERTRUDE

Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS

Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.

[Reads.]

'Doubt thou the stars are fire;

Doubt that the sun doth move;

Doubt truth to be a liar;

But never doubt I love.

'O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have
not art to reckon my groans: but that I love thee
best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.

'Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this
machine is to him, HAMLET.'

This, in obedience, hath my daughter show'd me;

And more above, hath his solicitings,

As they fell out by time, by means, and place,

All given to mine ear.

CLAUDIUS

But how hath she

Receiv'd his love?

POLONIUS

What do you think of me?

CLAUDIUS

As of a man faithful and honourable.

POLONIUS

I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
When I had seen this hot love on the wing,
As I perceiv'd it, I must tell you that,
Before my daughter told me, what might you,
Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,
If I had play'd the desk or table-book,
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb;
Or look'd upon this love with idle sight:
What might you think? No, I went round to work,
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:
'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy sphere;
This must not be:' and then I precepts gave her,

[Everyone's a critic.]

B. Rather than answer the question directly what is Polonius first concerned with?

C. If Polonius had not intervened, what might he have been hoping for?

D. What reason that was his strongest does Polonius not mention? Check out page 16.

That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;
And he, repulsed, a short tale to make,
Fell into a sadness; then into a fast;
Thence to a watch; thence into a weakness;
Thence to a lightness; and, by this declension,
Into the madness wherein now he raves,
And all we wail for.

CLAUDIUS

Do you think 'tis this?

GERTRUDE

It may be, very likely.

POLONIUS

Hath there been such a time, I'd fain know that!
That I have positively said 'Tis so,'
When it prov'd otherwise?

CLAUDIUS

Not that I know.

POLONIUS

Take this from this, if this be otherwise:
[Points to his head and shoulder.]
If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.

CLAUDIUS

How may we try it further?

POLONIUS

You know sometimes he walks for hours together
Here in the lobby.

GERTRUDE

So he does indeed.

POLONIUS

At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him:
Be you and I behind an arras then;
Mark the encounter: if he love her not,
And he not from his reason fall'n thereon
Let me be no assistant for a state,
But keep a farm and carters.

CLAUDIUS

We will try it.

GERTRUDE

But look where sadly the poor wretch comes
reading.

POLONIUS

Away, I do beseech you, both away
I'll board him presently: O, give me leave.
[Exeunt King, Queen, and Attendants.]
[Enter Hamlet, reading.]

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET

Well, God-a-mercy.

POLONIUS

Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET

A. Why is Polonius so sure? What do you understand about his character?

[Remember this when we visit Gertrude's bedroom.]

B. What earlier scene about finding the truth does this boast remind us of?

What will Polonius now ask of his obedient daughter?

[carters- workers who drive carts.]

<p>Excellent well; you're a fishmonger.</p> <p>POLONIUS</p> <p>Not I, my lord.</p> <p>HAMLET</p> <p>Then I would you were so honest a man.</p> <p>POLONIUS</p> <p>Honest, my lord!</p> <p>HAMLET</p> <p>Ay, sir, to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.</p> <p>POLONIUS</p> <p>That's very true, my lord.</p> <p>HAMLET</p> <p>For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god-kissing carrion, Have you a daughter?</p> <p>POLONIUS</p> <p>I have, my lord.</p> <p>HAMLET</p> <p>Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a blessing, but not as your daughter may conceive: friend, look to't.</p> <p>POLONIUS</p> <p>How say you by that? [Aside.] Still harping on my daughter: yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger: he is far gone, far gone: and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near this. I'll speak to him again. What do you read, my lord?</p> <p>HAMLET</p> <p>Words, words, words.</p> <p>POLONIUS</p> <p>What is the matter, my lord?</p> <p>HAMLET</p> <p>Between who?</p> <p>POLONIUS</p> <p>I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.</p> <p>HAMLET</p> <p>Slanders, sir: for the satirical slave says here that old men have grey beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum; and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams: all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for you yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if, like a crab, you could go backward.</p> <p>POLONIUS</p> <p>[Aside.] Though this be madness, yet there is a method in't. Will you walk out of the air, my lord?</p> <p>HAMLET</p> <p>Into my grave?</p> <p>POLONIUS</p> <p>Indeed, that is out o' the air. [Aside.] How pregnant sometimes his replies are! A happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not</p>	<p>[fishmonger- seller of fish.]</p> <p>C. In what way is Polonius not being honest?</p> <p>D. How is this ugly metaphor about lovemaking like the ghost's speech? (Pages 21-22)</p> <p>[conception- the bringing to life, pregnancy.]</p> <p>A. What does this exchange share with Hamlet's first words in the play in response to Claudius? (Page 8)</p> <p>B. How does Hamlet use his "madness" to have a bit of fun with Polonius?</p>
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so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter. My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

HAMLET

You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal, except my life, except my life, except my life.

POLONIUS

Fare you well, my lord.

HAMLET

These tedious old fools!

[Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

Strumpet- whore

Conjure- to ask earnestly

Consonancy- harmony, sympathy

Molt- shed feathers

Promontory- cliff

Firmament- sky or heavens

Fretted- ornamented with raised work

Quintessence- best part

Lenten- spare

Foil- a blunt small sword

Wonted- accustomed

Aery (Aerie)- eagle's nest

Sable- black

Gules- red

Carbuncles- sores

Rack- destruction

POLONIUS

You go to seek the Lord Hamlet; there he is.

ROSENCRANTZ

[To Polonius.] God save you, sir!

[Exit Polonius.]

GUILDENSTERN

My honoured lord!

ROSENCRANTZ

My most dear lord!

HAMLET

My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?

ROSENCRANTZ

As the indifferent children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN

Happy in that we are not over-happy;

On fortune's cap we are not the very button.

HAMLET

Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ

Neither, my lord.

HAMLET

Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours?

GUILDENSTERN

Faith, her privates we.

HAMLET

In the secret parts of fortune? O, most true; she is a strumpet. What's the news?

ROSENCRANTZ

None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

HAMLET

C. What does this line make clear about Hamlet's understanding of Polonius' true intent?

[Well, Polonius has struck out, and here come Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to take their turn at bat.]

D. How does Hamlet's first exchange with R & G teach us the sort of friendship they had in the past? What sort of guys are R & G?

A. What does Hamlet suspect about the sudden appearance of these two old friends?

Then is doomsday near; but your news is not true.
Let me question more in particular: what have you,
my good friends, deserved at the hands of fortune,
that she sends you to prison hither?

GUILDENSTERN

Prison, my lord!

HAMLET

Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ

Then is the world one.

HAMLET

A goodly one; in which there are many confines,
wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the
worst.

ROSENCRANTZ

We think not so, my lord.

HAMLET

Why, then 'tis none to you; for there is nothing
either good or bad but thinking makes it so: to me it
is a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ

Why, then, your ambition makes it one; 'tis too
narrow for your mind.

HAMLET

O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count
myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I
have bad dreams.

GUILDENSTERN

Which dreams, indeed, are ambition; for the very
substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of
a dream.

HAMLET

A dream itself is but a shadow.

ROSENCRANTZ

Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a
quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

HAMLET

Then are our beggars' bodies, and our monarchs
and outstretch'd heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall
we to the court? For, by my fay, I cannot reason.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

We'll wait upon you.

HAMLET

No such matter: I will not sort you with the rest of
my servants; for, to speak to you like an honest
man, I am most dreadfully attended. But, in the
beaten way of friendship, what make you at
Elsinore?

ROSENCRANTZ

To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

HAMLET

Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I
thank you: and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too
dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your
own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal

B. Why do you think Hamlet describes his world as a prison?

Polonius is sure the cause of Hamlet's madness is his daughter. What is Rosencrantz's pet theory?

C. What question does Hamlet's Conversation with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern provoke?

justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

GUILDENSTERN

What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET

Why, anything! but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour: I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

ROSENCRANTZ

To what end, my lord?

HAMLET

That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for or no.

ROSENCRANTZ

[To Guildenstern.] What say you?

HAMLET

[Aside.] Nay, then, I have an eye of you. If you love me, hold not off.

GUILDENSTERN

My lord, we were sent for.

HAMLET

I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen molt no feather. I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me; no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ

My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

HAMLET

Why did you laugh then, when I said 'Man delights not me'?

ROSENCRANTZ

To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what Lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they

Here Hamlet is forced to beg his good friends to be honest with him. Who else in the play has not been honest with him? Who has “betrayed” his expectations?

Though this is not the sort of answer that R & G can report to Claudius, what does this speech teach us about Hamlet's mind and feelings?

D. What earlier exchange would make Hamlet think these two a couple of dirty-minded bozos?

[coted- outran.]

coming to offer you service.

HAMLET

He that plays the king shall be welcome, his majesty shall have tribute of me; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickle o' the sere; and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't.

What players are they?

ROSENCRANTZ

Even those you were wont to take such delight in, the tragedians of the city.

HAMLET

How chances it they travel? Their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

ROSENCRANTZ

I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

HAMLET

Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?

ROSENCRANTZ

No, indeed, are they not.

HAMLET

How comes it? Do they grow rusty?

ROSENCRANTZ

Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace: but there is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't: these are now the fashion; and so berattle the common stages, so they call them, that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills and dare scarce come thither.

HAMLET

What, are they children? Who maintains 'em? How are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players, as it is most like, if their means are no better, their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession?

ROSENCRANTZ

Faith, there has been much to do on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy: there was, for awhile, no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

HAMLET

Is't possible?

GUILDENSTERN

O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

HAMLET

Do the boys carry it away?

A. What change of attitude does the announcement of the players cause in Hamlet?

[Hamlet wants to know why the players are traveling when they were popular in their own town and theater.]

B. What is the latest fad in town that causes the players to start traveling?

[eyases- young hawks.]

C. Why is it illogical of young actors to make their performances popular?

[succession- future careers as adult actors.]

D. What else has the youngsters' popularity caused?

ROSENCRANTZ

Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load too.

HAMLET

It is not very strange; for my uncle is king of Denmark, and those that would make mouths at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats a-piece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[Flourish of trumpets within.]

GUILDENSTERN

There are the players.

HAMLET

Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come: the appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony: let me comply with you in this garb; lest my extent to the players, which I tell you must show fairly outward, should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome: but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN

In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET

I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

[Enter Polonius.]

POLONIUS

Well be with you, gentlemen!

HAMLET

Hark you, Guildenstern: and you too: at each ear a hearer: that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

ROSENCRANTZ

Happily he's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

HAMLET

I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it. You say right, sir: o' Monday morning; 'twas so indeed.

POLONIUS

My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET

My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome,

POLONIUS

The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET

Buzz, buzz!

POLONIUS

Upon my honour,

HAMLET

Then came each actor on his ass,

POLONIUS

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy,

A. To what does Hamlet liken this fad?

B. What gesture makes plain Hamlet's pleasure at the appearance of the actors?

C. How does Hamlet dispense with R & G?

[clouts- clothes.]

D. What role is Polonius taking on? Why does he relish such a role?

comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

HAMLET

O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

POLONIUS

What treasure had he, my lord?

HAMLET

Why!

'One fair daughter, and no more,
The which he loved passing well.'

POLONIUS

[Aside.] Still on my daughter.

HAMLET

Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

POLONIUS

If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

HAMLET

Nay, that follows not.

POLONIUS

What follows, then, my lord?

HAMLET

Why!

'As by lot, God wot,'
and then, you know,

'It came to pass, as most like it was!'
The first row of the pious chanson will show you more; for look where my abridgment comes.

[Enter four or five Players.]

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all: I am glad to see thee well! Welcome, good friends! O, my old friend! Thy face is valanc'd since I saw thee last; comest thou to beard me in Denmark?! What, my young lady and mistress! By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring! Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at anything we see: we'll have a speech straight: come, give us a taste of your quality: come, a passionate speech.

FIRST PLAYER

What speech, my lord?

HAMLET

I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted; or if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the million, 'twas caviare to the general; but it was, as I received it, and others, whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of mine, an excellent play, well digested

[Seneca- a Roman writer of tragedies. Plautus- of comedies.]

A. Which of Polonius's buttons does Hamlet like to push?

[chanson- song.]

B. Which of the actors does Hamlet especially welcome here?

[chopine- a raised clog.]

C. What kind of speech does Hamlet long to hear? What qualities does he want it to have?

in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember, one said there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury, nor no matter in the phrase that might indite the author of affectation; but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in it I chiefly loved: 'twas Aeneas' tale to Dido, and thereabout of it especially where he speaks of Priam's slaughter: if it live in your memory, begin at this line: let me see, let me see: The rugged Pyrrhus, like th' Hyrcanian beast, it is not so: it begins with Pyrrhus:

'The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the ominous horse,
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd
With heraldry more dismal; head to foot
Now is be total gules; horridly trick'd
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
Bak'd and impasted with the parching streets,
That lend a tyrannous and a damned light
To their vile murders: roasted in wrath and fire,
And thus o'ersized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks.'

So, proceed you.

POLONIUS

'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent
and good discretion.

FIRST PLAYER

Anon he finds him,
Striking too short at Greeks: his antique sword,
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command: unequal match'd,
Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide;
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
The unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base; and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear: for lo! His sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' the air to stick:
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood;
And, like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.
But as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region; so, after Pyrrhus' pause,
A roused vengeance sets him new a-work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall

[sallets- a bit of salad or flavoring.]

[This story is about the fall of Troy. Priam is the aged king and Hecuba is his wife. Pyrrhus, son of Achilles, is avenging his father's death by savagely killing all Trojans he can find.]

D. How does Pyrrhus look after leaving the Trojan horse and attacking Trojans?

A. What do you think? Is Polonius's praise genuine?

[he- Pyrrhus; him- old Priam.]

B. In what state is Priam when Pyrrhus finds him?

What moment in the story does the writer prolong? Why would such a moment be painful to Hamlet?

On Mars's armor, forg'd for proof eterne,
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.

Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,
In general synod, take away her power;
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
As low as to the fiends!

POLONIUS

This is too long.

HAMLET

It shall to the barber's, with your beard. Pr'ythee say
on. He's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he
sleeps: say on; come to Hecuba.

[bawdry- dirty story or joke.]

FIRST PLAYER

But who, O who, had seen the mobled queen,

[mobled- hooded.]

HAMLET

'The mobled queen'?

POLONIUS

That's good! 'Mobled queen' is good.

FIRST PLAYER

Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames
With bisson rheum; a clout upon that head
Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,
About her lank and all o'erteemed loins,
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up:
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd,
'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have

How is the behavior of this widow different from another widow we know? Why do you think Hamlet asked for this speech?

[bison rheum- bloody tears.]

[diadem- crown.]

pronounc'd:

But if the gods themselves did see her then,
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,
The instant burst of clamour that she made,
Unless things mortal move them not at all,
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,
And passion in the gods.

[milch- cry, milk.]

POLONIUS

Look, whether he has not turn'd his colour, and has
tears in's eyes. Pray you, no more!

HAMLET

'Tis well. I'll have thee speak out the rest of this
soon. Good my lord, will you see the players well
bestowed? Do you hear? Let them be well used; for
they are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the
time; after your death you were better have a bad
epitaph than their ill report while you live.

c. What power do playwrights have?

POLONIUS

My lord, I will use them according to their
desert.

D. What two ways of looking at human beings are represented in this exchange between Polonius and Hamlet?

HAMLET

Odd's bodikin, man, better: use every man after his
desert, and who should scape whipping? Use them
after your own honour and dignity: the less they
deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take
them in.

POLONIUS

Come, sirs.

HAMLET

Follow him, friends. we'll hear a play to-morrow.
[Exeunt Polonius with all the Players but the First.]

Dost thou hear me, old friend? Can you play 'The Murder of Gonzago'?

FIRST PLAYER

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

We'll ha't to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines which I would set down and insert in't? Could you not?

FIRST PLAYER

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

Very well. Follow that lord; and look you mock him not. [Exit First Player.]
My good friends [to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern], I'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ

Good my lord!
[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

Rogue- dishonest tramp
Visage- facial complexion
Waned- became pale
Pate- head
'Swounds- "God's wounds"
Offal- animal guts

Scullion- kitchen servant
Malefaction- evil deed
Tent- to probe or test
Quick- vital part
Blench- flinch from fear

HAMLET

Ay, so, God b' wi' ye!
Now I am alone.
O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wan'd;
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!
For Hecuba?
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;
Make mad the guilty, and appall the free;
Confound the ignorant, and amaze, indeed,
The very faculties of eyes and ears.

Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,

A. What would you guess this "Murder of Gonzago" is about?

B. What would you guess this speech might be about?

C. Interestingly, what does Hamlet ask of the player? What does his request suggest?

[As before, we have divided the speech into sections so that you can more easily follow Hamlet's changing thoughts.]

D. As Polonius was, what capacity of the actor is Hamlet most struck by? How does this capacity compare to the thoughts in Hamlet's speech about "seeming" on page 8?

A. What does the actor lack that Hamlet has (or ought to have)?

Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not for a king
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? Breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the
throat
As deep as to the lungs? who does me this, ha?
'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd, and lack gall
To make oppression bitter; or ere this
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal: bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless
villain!
O, vengeance!

Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
A scullion!

Fie upon't! foh!! About, my brain! I have heard
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ, I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks;
I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench,
I know my course.

The

spirit that I have seen
May be the devil: and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds
More relative than this. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.
[Exit.]

B. What does Hamlet complain about himself?

C. What does he say is the cause of his lack of action?

D. How does Hamlet judge the passion he just exhibited in this speech?

A. What plan does Hamlet hatch? How does this plan address his need for a motive?

Though he complained of his own cowardice above, what other reason does Hamlet have for not revenging his father's murder?

B. What do you imagine is the "best case scenario" Hamlet is hoping for in putting this play before the king?