

## Act I, Scene ii: Hamlet's Soliloquy: Sad that his dad is dead and his mom is a weak floozy!

O, that this [too too solid](#) flesh would melt  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
[His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!](#) O God! God!  
How weary, stale, [flat](#) and unprofitable, (135)  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an [unweeded garden](#),  
That grows to seed; things rank and gross [in nature](#)  
[Possess it merely](#). That it should come to this!  
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two: (140)  
So excellent a king; that was, to this,  
[Hyperion](#) to a [satyr](#); so loving to my mother  
That he might not [beteem](#) the winds of heaven  
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!  
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him, (145)  
As if increase of appetite had grown

By what it fed on: and yet, within a month --  
Let me not think on't -- Frailty, thy name is woman! --  
A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
With which she follow'd my poor father's body, (150)  
[Like Niobe](#), all tears: -- why she, even she --  
O, God! [a beast, that wants discourse of reason](#),  
Would have mourn'd longer--married with my uncle,  
My father's brother, but no more like my father  
Than I to [Hercules](#): within a month: (155)  
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
Had left the [flushing in her galled eyes](#),  
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post  
With such [dexterity](#) to [incestuous sheets!](#)  
It is not nor it cannot come to good: (160)  
[But break, my heart](#); for I must hold my tongue.

1. How is Hamlet feeling at this point?
2. How does he feel about his mother?
3. Is he justified in feeling this way about his own self and his mother?

### Summary of the rest of Act:

Hamlet is not allowed to attend college now.

Laertes, the son to Polonius (Zazu) is allowed to go.

Laertes' sister, Ophelia, is going out with Hamlet. Both Polonius and Laertes think Hamlet is a player—just wants to get in her pants. They say, “STAY AWAY FROM HAM!” She listens.

Horatio (Raffiki) is Hamlet's best friend. He is a scholar, he's incredibly smart and he sees and informs Hamlet of the ghost first.

Hamlet goes to see the ghost

#### Act I, scene v: The Ghost—should we believe him?

Ghost: I am thy father's spirit,  
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,  
And for the day confin'd to fast in fires,  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purg'd away. But that I am forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison house,  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,  
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,  
And each particular hair to stand on end  
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.  
But this eternal blazon must not be  
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!  
If thou didst ever thy dear father love-  
Hamlet. O God!  
Father's Ghost. Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.  
Hamlet. Murther?  
Father's Ghost. Murther most foul, as in the best it is;  
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.  
Hamlet. Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift  
As meditation or the thoughts of love,  
May sweep to my revenge.  
Father's Ghost. I find thee apt;  
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed  
That rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,  
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear.  
'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,  
A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark  
Is by a forged process of my death  
Rankly abus'd. But know, thou noble youth,  
The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown.  
Hamlet. O my prophetic soul!  
My uncle?

Father's Ghost. Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
 With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts-  
 O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power  
 So to seduce!- won to his shameful lust  
 The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.  
 O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there,  
 From me, whose love was of that dignity  
 That it went hand in hand even with the vow  
 I made to her in marriage, and to decline  
 Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor  
 To those of mine!  
 But virtue, as it never will be mov'd,  
 Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,  
 So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,  
 Will sate itself in a celestial bed  
 And prey on garbage.  
 But soft! methinks I scent the morning air.  
 Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,  
 My custom always of the afternoon,  
 Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
 With juice of cursed hebona in a vial,  
 And in the porches of my ears did pour  
 The leperous distilment; whose effect  
 Holds such an enmity with blood of man  
 That swift as quicksilver it courses through  
 The natural gates and alleys of the body,  
 And with a sudden vigour it doth posset  
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
 The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine;  
 And a most instant tetter bark'd about,  
 Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust  
 All my smooth body.  
 Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand  
 Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd;  
 Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,  
 Unhous'led, disappointed, unanel'd,  
 No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
 With all my imperfections on my head.

**Summary:** Hamlet secretly decides to act crazy to throw everyone off his plan for vengeance.

1. Does the Ghost's story have more credibility than Claudius' words?
2. Is there evidence to believe that the Ghost holds ill will towards his wife, Gertrude?

**Act II, scene i: Polonius spies on his own son and meddles in his daughter's love-life**

**LORD 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  
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,--

**LORD POLONIUS**

Wherefore should you do this?

**REYNALDO**

Ay, my lord,  
I would know that.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Marry, sir, here's my drift;  
And I believe, it is a fetch of wit:  
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 assured  
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.

**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.'

**LORD POLONIUS**

At 'closes in the consequence,' ay, marry;  
He closes 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 a' 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 windlasses 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.

**LORD POLONIUS**

God be wi' you; fare you well.

**REYNALDO**

Good my lord!

**LORD POLONIUS**

Observe his inclination in yourself.

**REYNALDO**

I shall, my lord.

**LORD POLONIUS**

And let him ply his music.

**REYNALDO**

Well, my lord.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Farewell!

*Exit REYNALDO*

*Enter OPHELIA*

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?

**OPHELIA**

O, my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted!

LORD POLONIUS

With what, i' the name of God?

**OPHELIA**

My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,  
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced;  
No hat upon his head; his stockings foul'd,  
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ancle;  
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.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Mad for thy love?

**OPHELIA**

My lord, I do not know;  
But truly, I do fear it.

**LORD 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 raised 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 helps,  
And, to the last, bended their light on me.

**LORD 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  
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 fetters and denied  
His access to me.

**LORD 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!  
By heaven, it is 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.

Additional text to note: Claudius has two of Hamlet's childhood friends spy on him. Hamlet is suspicious of their unexpected and sudden interest in his current life. He knows he's being spied on. NOW, we have lots of people being spied on. Can we really trust anyone in this play?

1. **What character traits best represent Polonius?**
2. **How do ears and hearing (the motif) fit into these passages?**
3. **How can we (the audience) find credibility in Polonius?**
4. **Is Ophelia a dutiful daughter? Why?**

Act III (refer to CSU text) "To Be" Speech—contemplates suicide.

**Act III: Claudius's Confession:**

O, my offence is rank it smells to heaven;

It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,  
A brother's murder. Pray can I not,  
Though inclination be as sharp as will:  
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;      40  
And, like a man to double business bound,  
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,  
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand  
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,  
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy  
But to confront the visage of offence?  
And what's in prayer but this two-fold force,  
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,  
Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up;      50  
My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer  
Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?  
That cannot be; since I am still possess'd  
Of those effects for which I did the murder,  
My crown, mine own ambition and my queen.  
May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?  
In the corrupted currents of this world  
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,  
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself  
Buys out the law: but 'tis not so above;      60  
There is no shuffling, there the action lies  
In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd,  
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,  
To give in evidence. What then? what rests?  
Try what repentance can: what can it not?  
Yet what can it when one can not repent?  
O wretched state! O bosom black as death!  
O limed soul, that, struggling to be free,  
Art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay!  
Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel,      70  
Be soft as sinews of the newborn babe!  
All may be well.

[Retires and kneels]

[Enter HAMLET]

HAMLET            Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;  
And now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven;  
And so am I revenged. That would be scann'd:  
A villain kills my father; and for that,  
I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
To heaven.

O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.  
He took my father grossly, full of bread; 80  
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;  
And how his audit stands who knows save heaven?  
But in our circumstance and course of thought,  
'Tis heavy with him: and am I then revenged,  
To take him in the purging of his soul,  
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?  
No!

Additional information: Hamlet goes to speak with his mother after he embarrasses the royal family. You see, he told some actors that were in town to reenact the murder of a king by his own brother in front of the kingdom. Claudius flips out, almost admits guilt and runs to his room. Hamlet believes this is enough to validate the Ghost's story. He wants to go kill him.

Fearful of Claudius' confession to God, he goes to speak with his mother instead of stabbing the new king. She says, Hamlet, you are making the king mad! He says, "Mom, you're making the king (my father, mad! You don't know who this man is that you've married!"

Hamlet grills his mom about the whole murder and he really gets in her face. Polonius, who is eavesdropping (again), yells, "Murder!" behind a curtain.

Hamlet thinks it's the King, so he stabs him. (This is Ophelia and Laertes' dad. So, Ham just killed his GF's dad. Ouch).

1. Does Claudius feel badly about murdering his brother?
2. What proof do we have that he does/does not feel badly?
3. Why does Hamlet hesitate in killing Claudius?

Act IV: Hamlet sees the Prince of Norway marching to Poland to take land and men—he sees great resolution in Fortinbras' actions. Hamlet feels like, "If he can do it, why can't I?"

How all occasions do inform against me, (35)  
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,  
If his chief good and market of his time  
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.  
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,  
Looking before and after, gave us not (40)  
That capability and god-like reason  
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be  
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple  
Of thinking too precisely on the event,  
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom (45)

And ever three parts coward, I do not know  
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do;  
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means  
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me:  
Witness this army of such mass and charge (50)  
Led by a delicate and tender prince,  
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd  
Makes mouths at the invisible event,  
Exposing what is mortal and unsure  
To all that fortune, death and danger dare, (55)  
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great argument,  
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,  
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd, (60)  
Excitements of my reason and my blood,  
And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see  
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,  
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,  
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot (65)  
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,  
Which is not tomb enough and continent  
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,  
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing **worth!**

**Summary: Ophelia finds out about her dad and goes crazy! She drowns herself in a nearby stream. Some argue that it was accidental, but we can debate the merits of this theory.**

**Laertes also finds out about his father's death and is not happy. Claudius convinces Laertes to avenge his father's death. Hamlet, of course, killed Polonius, so this is an easy plan for Claudius to dispose of Hamlet.**

**Laertes has mixed emotions, but Claudius pulls the old, "How much do you really love your dad?" card. They agree to host a fencing match, but they will poison the end of Laertes sword to ensure Hamlet dies. Also, to reassure themselves of a sure-death, they plan to poison a goblet of wine that Hamlet is sure to drink from.**

- 1. How does Hamlet change in this passage?**
- 2. What words allow us to understand that he has transitioned from thought to action?**

**Act V: Yorick's Skull—seeing death before his eyes.**

**HAMLET**

Let me see.

*[Takes the skull.]*

Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio:  
a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy.  
Too much jest, at times. Honestly, sometimes Yorick  
Just kept going with the jests, even when everyone  
Else was done. Look, I love a good jest, ask anyone.  
They will say "Hamlet? That guy loves jests."  
But Yorick would just keep going and going.  
Too far, he would go, Horatio. Much too far.  
Sometimes I could have used less jest and more fancy.  
Oh Yorick, where be your gibes now? Your gambols?  
Your songs? Your hair? Your skin? Yorick, where is your skin?  
You are just a naked skull. Did someone take your skin?  
I remember it well: most of your skull used to be covered in skin.  
And yet now, not so much. Truly, 'tis strange.  
You are as skinless as a grilled chicken sandwich, Yorick.  
Oh, but once, you had a bunch of lips, near the mouth area,  
And a nose, somewhere around here.  
It made you look less frightening than you look now.  
His eyes, that once twinkled so after a particularly good gibe or gambol,  
Are now gone. Maybe they're around here somewhere?  
No, do not look for them, Horatio, they could have rolled anywhere.  
Anyways, I should have asked before just grabbing this skull.  
You there, First Clown, is it alright if we just grab any of these skulls?  
They were laying about, so I figured that this is  
just a "grab whatever you want" sort of deal.  
Now, my hands are cov'rd in skull grime.  
I really should have asked if you're allowed to just grab  
Any of these skulls. I will have to go wash my hands.  
*[Puts down the skull.]*  
Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

Summary:

Hamlet sees Laertes, Claudius, Gertrude and others coming to the cemetery. Hamlet has no idea that Ophelia has died and her funeral is occurring. He freaks out! When Laertes sees Hamlet, they fight. Claudius puts a stop to it. Eventually, Hamlet is convinced to fight in the duel they have planned earlier.

Hamlet is not as good a swordsman as Laertes, but he's mad and he wants to fight for his GF honor.

They fight in the duel. Hamlet is doing pretty good, but he and Laertes accidentally switch swords in the middle of the fray. Hamlet was struck before the switch, then Laertes was struck after. They're both poisoned. Oh, and the goblet that Hamlet was supposed to drink from, well, his mom drank from it. All

of them will die. Before Hamlet dies, he drives his sword into Claudius and forces the remaining poison from the goblet down his throat.

Fortinbras stumbles in after defeating the Polacks. He can't believe the disarray of the kingdom. Right before Hamlet dies, he tells the only remaining survivor of the royal party, Horatio, to give the kingdom to Fortinbras—he deserves it. The reason being—King Hamlet had taken land, life and title from Fortinbras' father in the war. That is why he was in purgatory. Fortinbras had lost his father as well, so there's a nice foil at work there. Hamlet restores balance to the kingdom and everyone agrees that Uncle Scar, (Claudius, was a bad apple).

1. How does Hamlet perceive death?
2. Does he assign value to life/death?
3. How do his feelings about life affect his feelings for Ophelia?