

“Easy Reading Old World Literature”

# Hamlet

**LEVEL 4**

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## About the Author

William Shakespeare was born in 1564. He lived in Stratford-on-Avon, a city in England. His mother's name was Mary Arden. His father, John, was a wealthy businessman. Very little is known about Shakespeare's early life. Some think he went to a free school near his home. There, children learned about God, studied Latin, and practiced speaking. When he was 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. They had a daughter and a set of twins.

Shakespeare moved to London. He was well-known as an actor. He also was famous for writing plays. He and his group of actors opened the Globe Theatre in 1599. They performed plays there in the summer. Later, they worked under King James I and were called "The King's Men." Then, they bought the Blackfriars Theatre for performing in winter. A fire destroyed the Globe in 1613. By the time a new Globe was built, Shakespeare had stopped writing. He died in his hometown of Stratford on April 23, 1616. No other writer's plays have been acted so many times, in so many countries.

## Interdisciplinary Teaching Suggestions

### *Language Arts:*

**Create Front-Page News:** Divide the class into groups, assigning one chapter of the story to each group. Each student writes a news or feature article about one character or event in that chapter, and creates a headline for the article.

**Dramatize a Legend:** As in *Hamlet*, many Shakespearean plays adapted material from old legends. Have your class select a legend from any culture they choose, and rewrite the legend as a play. Students plan costumes, stage set, and props, and perform the play.

### *Math:*

**Create Graphs:** Have students list all the characters in *Hamlet*. Then, students vote for their favorite character, and draw various kinds of graphs showing the results of the poll.

### *Science:*

**Research Information:** Three characters in *Hamlet* die from poison. Ask students to create a list of poisons, their effects, and first-aid treatments for each of them.

**Study and Apply a Scientific Principle:** One of Shakespeare's characters drowns in a brook where a tree branch and flower garlands are floating. Assign students to research the principle of specific gravity and give their reasons why some objects float in water and others do not. Then, list five objects in each category.

### *Social Studies:*

**Evaluate Entertainment Industry Practices:** Have your class read about and discuss the pros and cons of using child actors in Elizabethan times and why adult actors opposed this practice. Guide students in comparing their findings with the contemporary use of child actors in the entertainment industry.

### *Geography:*

**Read a Map:** Supply each student with a small-scale copy of a map of Europe, as it looked in Elizabethan times. Have students color the five countries mentioned in *Hamlet* and approximate the distances that characters traveled from Denmark to each of those countries.

### *General:*

**Focus on Perspectives:** The pirates in *Hamlet* save one character's life. Guide students to research other examples in history of good things done by pirates. Then, draw an illustration of each event and write an accompanying caption.

**Plan a New Experience:** Shakespearean characters often engage in fencing matches. Expose students to information about fencing and its continued practice by inviting a member of a fencing team to give a demonstration to the class.

## WORDS USED

Story 21

Story 22

Story 23

Story 24

Story 25

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### KEY WORDS

---

figure  
mood  
poison  
prince  
silence  
urge

appearance  
disturb  
doubt  
news  
uneasy  
upset

gloomy  
insist  
murmur  
perform  
prison  
rage

fade  
hesitate  
meanwhile  
persuade  
speech  
suffer

blame  
cheerful  
gasp  
mutter  
protest  
stumble

---

### NECESSARY WORDS

---

armor  
foul  
ghost  
grieve  
revenge  
rotten

behavior  
castle  
liar  
Majesty  
nephew  
obey

actors  
admit  
guilty  
pleasure  
suspect

agree  
dangerous  
honest  
honesty  
owe

balance  
command  
conversation  
punish  
widow

Story 26

Story 27

Story 28

Story 29

Story 30

---

### KEY WORDS

---

encourage  
knee  
natural  
scold  
scowl  
throne

disgust  
dismay  
forever  
glare  
remind  
responsible

court  
mumble  
pain  
pirate  
plunge  
skill

difficult  
dreadful  
groan  
horrify  
shriek  
wail

anger  
fought  
nervous  
pearl  
realize  
succeed

---

### NECESSARY WORDS

---

ashamed  
cruel  
deed  
offend  
pray  
soul  
sword  
thrust

actions  
crazy  
demand  
marriage  
seal

comfort  
death  
nonsense  
rumor

casket  
challenge  
control  
grave  
gravedigger  
settle  
shame

battle  
pierce  
soldier  
wine

# The Ghost Appears

## PREPARATION

### Key Words

<b>figure</b>	(fig'yər)	the form or shape of something or someone <i>In the shadows, Ray saw a <u>figure</u> cross the road.</i>
<b>mood</b>	(müd)	a state of mind or feeling <i>Juan was in an awful <u>mood</u> because his car broke down.</i>
<b>poison</b>	(poi'zn)	something used to kill or cause great harm to a living body <i>Harry put <u>poison</u> on the mouse traps.</i>
<b>prince</b>	(prins)	a son of a king or queen; or the son of a king's or queen's son <i>Because the United States is led by a president, not a king, we have no <u>prince</u>.</i>
<b>silence</b>	(si' lens)	1. an order to be quiet, to keep still <i>"<u>Silence!</u>" ordered the judge.</i> 2. a state of quiet, with no sound or noise <i>There was <u>silence</u> in the room as the movie began.</i>
<b>urge</b>	(ərj)	to ask strongly or press someone to do something <i>Susan's mother had to <u>urge</u> her to clean up her room.</i>

# The Ghost Appears

## Necessary Words

<b>armor</b>	(är´mər)	a covering worn to help keep one safe during fighting. It is often made of metal. <i>The knight put on his <u>armor</u> before joining the fight.</i>
<b>foul</b>	(foul)	something terrible or awful <i>Leaving the kittens by the side of the road was a <u>foul</u> thing to do.</i>
<b>ghost</b>	(gōst)	the spirit of one who is dead <i>Jason wondered if the old house had a <u>ghost</u>.</i>
<b>grieve</b>	(grev)	to feel deep sadness; to be very sad <i>Kate could not help but <u>grieve</u> when her dog died.</i>
<b>revenge</b>	(ri venj´)	to do harm in return for a wrong done to oneself or another <i>When John lost his job, he wanted to take <u>revenge</u> on the man who fired him.</i>
<b>rotten</b>	(rot´n)	bad; not good; wrong <i>After playing a <u>rotten</u> trick, both boys felt unhappy.</i>

## People

<b>Bernardo</b>	one of the king's men
<b>Horatio</b>	a good friend of Prince Hamlet's
<b>King Claudius</b>	the King of Denmark and brother of the late King Hamlet. He is also Prince Hamlet's uncle.
<b>Marcellus</b>	one of the king's men
<b>old Fortinbras</b>	the late King of Norway
<b>Prince Hamlet</b>	the son of the late King Hamlet

## Places

<b>Denmark</b>	a country in Europe between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea
<b>Norway</b>	a country in Europe, north of Denmark

# The Ghost Appears



*The ghost turned and disappeared in silence.*

**Preview:**

1. Read the name of the story.
2. Look at the picture.
3. Read the sentences under the picture.
4. Read the first seven paragraphs of the story.
5. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that the ghost looks like

- a. Marcellus.
- b. Horatio.
- c. Bernardo.
- d. the dead King of Denmark.

*Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 10 for the right answer.*

**Now read the story.**

Read to find out why the ghost appears.

# The Ghost Appears

"So, has this thing appeared again tonight?" Horatio asked the two men on watch.

Marcellus shook his head and said, "I have seen nothing."

"Last night --," Bernardo began.

"Silence!" Marcellus said. "Look, here it comes again!"

"And, just as before, looking like the dead King of Denmark," Bernardo added.

"Speak! Tell us who are you!" Horatio called out.

But the ghost turned and disappeared in silence.

"What do you think now, Horatio?" Bernardo asked. "Did we only imagine this ghost?"

"You're right. It looked exactly like the King. It even had on the armor he wore when he went to war against old Fortinbras of Norway. We must tell young Prince Hamlet about this."

Before Horatio could find the Prince, Hamlet's mother questioned him in front of the King. "Why are you still in such a black mood? You cannot continue to grieve for your dead father. Everything that lives must die. You must understand that."

"I do understand," Hamlet said. "But I will not hide my feelings."

"You are a good son to grieve for your father," King Claudius said, "but now it is time to put your dark mood aside and be of good cheer with us."

Hamlet stared at his mother and uncle as they left the room. *How could she do this rotten thing?* He moaned softly. *My father has been dead less than two months and my mother has married his brother. Claudius is not half the man my father was. How could she be so weak? I cannot bear to think of it!*

At that moment, Horatio and Bernardo entered the room. Hamlet's black mood lifted when he saw his friends. After they'd spoken for a few minutes, Horatio said, "My friend, I think I saw your father last night."

Hamlet's eyes grew wide. "My father, the King?"

Horatio nodded and told the Prince how the ghost had appeared.

"I'll stand watch with you tonight," Hamlet said. "If the ghost walks again, I will speak to it. All is not well when a dead man's ghost appears. I fear he lost his life because of foul play."

That night Hamlet joined Horatio and Marcellus at their post. It wasn't long before Horatio grabbed Hamlet's arm and pointed. "Look! It comes!"

Hamlet stared at the ghostly figure in armor, not daring to believe his eyes. "Tell us, father, King Hamlet, why have you come?"

The ghost raised one hand and waved for Hamlet to follow him.

"Don't go!" Horatio said quickly.

"I must. He will not speak here," Hamlet said. He followed the figure into the fog, leaving Horatio and Marcellus behind.

"Let's follow him," Marcellus said. "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark."

Horatio shook his head. "I think it's out of our hands."

Suddenly, along the way, the ghost stopped. It turned to Hamlet. "I don't have much time. Daylight will soon be upon us. You must listen to what I have to say."

"Speak then," Hamlet said.

"You must revenge the killing of your father," the ghost told him.

"Killing?"

"A killing most foul!" the ghost said. "The story told is that I was sleeping in my garden when a snake bit me. All of Denmark believes this. But know this: the snake that took my life now wears my crown."

"My uncle?"

"Yes. My brother took my life and my wife as well." The ghost looked around and drew closer to Hamlet. "Morning is near. I must tell you my story quickly," it whispered. "As I took my afternoon nap, your uncle crept into the garden carrying a bottle of poison. He poured the poison in my ear. A deep, stinging hurt filled my body at once. It was terrible! If you have any love for me yet, Hamlet, I urge you to take revenge for this awful act. But, do no harm to your mother. Let heaven take care of her. Now, I must go. Remember me!"

The ghostly figure disappeared and Hamlet stared, amazed at what he'd just been told. *Remember you?* Hamlet thought. *Of course I will take revenge as you urge!*

At that moment, Horatio and Marcellus came toward him. "What happened?" Horatio asked.

"You would not believe what I've learned," Hamlet said.

"Tell us," his friend urged.

"I cannot," Hamlet said. "And you must promise never to tell anyone what you have seen here tonight."

"We won't," answered both men together.

Hamlet raised his blade. "Promise that even if I act a bit mad at times, you will keep silence about this night."

Horatio and Marcellus were alarmed at Hamlet's strange words, but gave their promise.

# The Ghost Appears

## COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

1. Who saw the ghost the first night?
  - a. Horatio
  - b. Hamlet
  - c. Marcellus and Bernardo
  - d. King Claudius
  
2. Why is Prince Hamlet in a sad mood?
  - a. He has no friends.
  - b. His father died.
  - c. His uncle poisoned him.
  - d. His mother questioned him.
  
3. Hamlet's mother married her husband's brother
  - a. before the war against old Fortinbras.
  - b. after the ghost appeared.
  - c. less than two months before her husband's death.
  - d. less than two months after her husband's death.
  
4. Prince Hamlet learned about the ghost from
  - a. Marcellus.
  - b. Horatio.
  - c. King Claudius.
  - d. Bernardo.
  
5. When Hamlet hears of the ghost, he worries that
  - a. his friends are lying.
  - b. his mother will question it.
  - c. something awful caused his father's death.
  - d. the ghost will kill him.

**Preview Answer:**

d. the dead King of Denmark.

6. Hamlet followed the ghost because
  - a. it waved for him to come.
  - b. it called him.
  - c. Horatio told him to follow it.
  - d. it grabbed his arm.
  
7. The ghost must hurry to tell its story to Hamlet before morning dawns, because
  - a. ghosts cannot appear in daylight.
  - b. something is rotten in Denmark.
  - c. Hamlet must leave.
  - d. Horatio and Bernardo will see the ghost if it stays.
  
8. Prince Hamlet calls the ghost
  - a. his uncle.
  - b. King Claudius.
  - c. King Hamlet.
  - d. his brother.
  
9. Another name for this story could be
  - a. "A Black Mood."
  - b. "The Plan for Revenge."
  - c. "The Promise of Silence."
  - d. "A Sign of Foul Play."
  
10. This story is mainly about
  - a. King Claudius marrying Hamlet's mother.
  - b. the dead King's ghost asking for revenge.
  - c. Hamlet's friends imagining they see a ghost.
  - d. Hamlet's promise to act mad.

Check your answers with the key on page 67.

# The Ghost Appears

## VOCABULARY CHECK

figure	mood	poison	prince	silence	urge
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### I. Sentences to Finish

Fill in the blank in each sentence with the correct key word from the box above.

1. The king and queen were joyful when their new \_\_\_\_\_ was born.
2. When the tall \_\_\_\_\_ stepped out of the shadows, I saw it was only my brother.
3. “\_\_\_\_\_ your friends to start eating,” said Mom, “or the pizza will get cold.”
4. Tess put the cleaner on a shelf high above the children when she saw the word, “\_\_\_\_\_” on the bottle.
5. There was complete \_\_\_\_\_ in the room, as everyone waited to hear the winner’s name.
6. Jan’s family was in a happy \_\_\_\_\_ when the new baby arrived home.

### II. Matching

Write the letter of the correct meaning from Column B next to the key word in Column A.

Column A	Column B
____ 1. urge	a. a state of mind or feeling
____ 2. figure	b. an order to keep still; a state of quiet
____ 3. silence	c. a king’s or queen’s son or grandson
____ 4. poison	d. the form or shape of a person or thing
____ 5. mood	e. to press someone to do something
____ 6. prince	f. something used to harm or kill a living body

Check your answers with the key on page 69.