

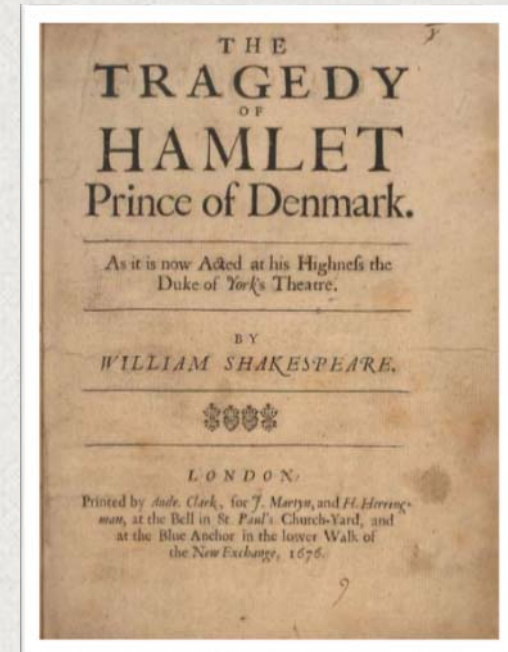
Hamlet



MONDADORI EDUCATION

The Play

- Shakespeare's most famous play
- The story was known through chronicles
- It is very close to modern sensibility because of
 1. Its hero's doubts and indecisions
 2. Lack of certainties
 3. Inability to communicate



A Tragedy

- A revenge tragedy. Hamlet should have sought revenge with all his force and as soon as possible.

But he does not do so!

- A tragedy of will → thought kills action
- Psychoanalytical reading: an exemplification of the Oedipus complex



The Story

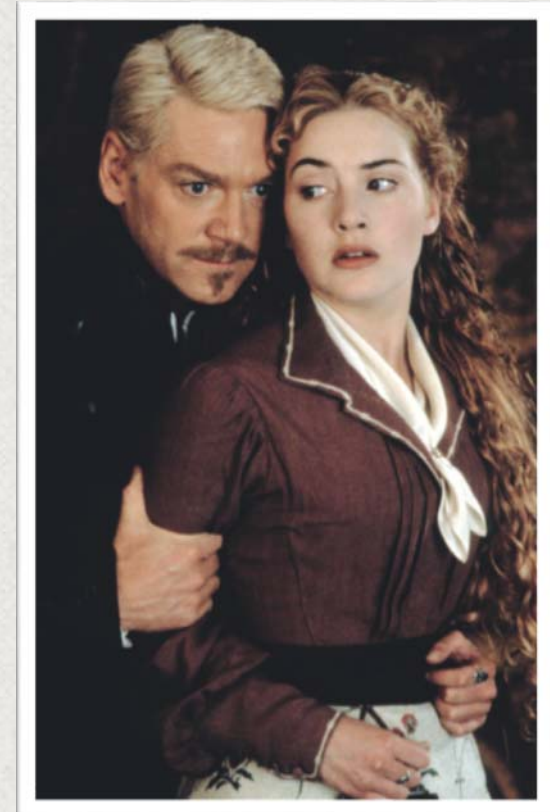
- Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, meets his dead father's ghost
- Hamlet finds out his father has been murdered by Claudius, his uncle and now his mother's husband
- Hamlet pretends to be mad in order to observe the behaviour of the king and queen



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The Story

- Some actors at Court perform a scene like that of Hamlet's father's murder: the king's reaction confirms what Hamlet already knows
- By mistake, Hamlet kills Polonius whose daughter, Ophelia, goes insane and drowns herself
- Polonius' son, Laertes, swears revenge



The Story

- The king wants to kill Hamlet and arranges a fencing match
- Laertes, on the king's advice uses a poisoned foil
- Hamlet mortally wounds Laertes and stabs the king
- The queen drinks a poisoned cup intended for Hamlet and dies
- Hamlet is killed



To Be, or Not to Be

- A famous monologue
- It seems to be the choice between action and inaction
- Hamlet is incapable to carry out his revenge



Two Philosophical Positions

1. **Stoic attitude** of enduring life's evils and misfortune at all costs and to all end

*Whether 'tis nobler in mind to suffer
The **slings and arrows** of outrageous fortune*

2. If necessary, man may end his life by **suicide**

*Or **to take arms** against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them.*

In both cases, life is seen as a **battle**

What's in Hamlet's Words?

- Profound pessimism

*To die, to sleep –
No more – and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep –
To sleep – perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub.
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.*



What's in Hamlet's Words?

- Human suffering

*For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?*



What's in Hamlet's Words?

- Hamlet examines the thought of **life after death**
- Hamlet's position about suicide is not clear: he is interrupted by Ophelia's coming onto the stage.
- His resentment at man's **incapacity for action** is clear

