

Enter **GHOST** and **HAMLET**

HAMLET

Where wilt thou lead me? Speak, I'll go no further.

GHOST

Mark me.

HAMLET

I will.

GHOST

My hour is almost come
When I to sulfurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

HAMLET

Alas, poor ghost!

GHOST

Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.

HAMLET

Speak. I am bound to hear.

GHOST

So art thou to revenge when thou shalt hear.

HAMLET

What?

GHOST

I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged 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 combinèd locks to part
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fearful porpentine.
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!

GHOST

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

The **GHOST** and **HAMLET** enter.

HAMLET

Where are you taking me? Speak. I'm not going any farther.

GHOST

Listen to me.

HAMLET

I will.

GHOST

The hour has almost come when I have to return to the horrible flames of purgatory.

HAMLET

Ah, poor ghost!

GHOST

Don't pity me. Just listen carefully to what I have to tell you.

HAMLET

Speak. I'm ready to hear you.

GHOST

You must be ready for revenge, too, when you hear me out.

HAMLET

What?

GHOST

I'm the ghost of your father, doomed for a certain period of time to walk the earth at night, while during the day I'm trapped in the fires of purgatory until I've done penance for my past sins. If I weren't forbidden to tell you the secrets of purgatory, I could tell you stories that would slice through your soul, freeze your blood, make your eyes jump out of their sockets, and your hair stand on end like porcupine quills. But mortals like you aren't allowed to hear this description of the afterlife. Listen, listen! If you ever loved your poor dear father—

HAMLET

Oh God!

GHOST

Take revenge for his horrible murder, that crime against nature.

HAMLET

Murder?

GHOST

Murder 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.

GHOST

I find thee apt,
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That roots 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 forgèd process of my death
Rankly abused. 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?

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 moved,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of
heaven,
So lust, though to a radiant angel linked,
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 hebenon in a vial,

HAMLET

Murder?

GHOST

His most horrible murder. Murder's always
horrible, but this one was especially horrible,
weird, and unnatural.

HAMLET

Hurry and tell me about it, so I can take
revenge right away, faster than a person falls
in love.

GHOST

I'm glad you're eager. You'd have to be as
lazy as a weed on the shores of Lethe not to
get riled up here. Now listen, Hamlet.
Everyone was told that a poisonous snake bit
me when I was sleeping in the orchard. But in
fact, that's a lie that's fooled everyone in
Denmark. You should know, my noble son,
the real snake that stung your father is now
wearing his crown.

HAMLET

I knew it! My uncle?

GHOST

Yes, that incestuous, adulterous animal. With
his clever words and fancy gifts, he seduced
my seemingly virtuous queen, persuading her
to give in to his lust. They were evil words
and gifts to seduce her like that!

Oh, Hamlet, how far she fell! She went from
me, who loved her with the dignity and
devotion that suits a legitimate marriage, to a
wretch whose natural gifts were poor
compared to mine.

But just as you can't corrupt a truly virtuous
person no matter how you try, the opposite is
also true: a lustful person like her can satisfy
herself in a heavenly union and then move on
to garbage.

But hang on, I think I smell the morning air.
So let me be brief here. Your uncle snuck up
to me while I was sleeping in the orchard, as I
always used to do in the afternoon, and
poured a vial of henbane poison into my
ear—that poison that moves like quicksilver

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 vigor doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood. So did it
mine.

And a most instant tetter barked 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
dispatched,

Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled.

No reckoning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head.

Oh, horrible, oh, horrible, most horrible!

If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not.

Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and damnèd incest.

But howsoever thou pursuest this act,
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught. Leave her to
heaven

And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once.
The glowworm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire.
Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me.

through the veins and curdles the blood,
which is just what it did to me. I broke out in
a scaly rash that covered my smooth body
with a revolting crust. And that's how my
brother robbed me of my life, my crown, and
my queen all at once. He cut me off in the
middle of a sinful life.

I had no chance to repent my sins or receive
last rites. Oh, it's horrible, horrible, so
horrible! If you are human, don't stand for it.

Don't let the Danish king's bed be a nest of
incest. But however you go about your
revenge, don't corrupt your mind or do any
harm to your mother.

Leave her to God and her own guilt.

Now, good-bye. The glowworm's light is
beginning to fade, so morning is near.

Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye. Remember
me.

Hamlet (W. Shakespeare)

Act 1, Scene 5

ACTIVITIES

1. Compare the original text with the modern version, and find the equivalents.

- a. Hast
- b. Thou
- c. Thy
- d. List
- e. Pity me not
- f. Mortals
- g. Haste me to know't
- h. Thee
- i. A serpent stung me
- j. Ay
- k. Thou noble youth
- l. Methinks
- m. I scent
- n. Howsoever



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2. Who is the ghost?

3. What does the ghost tell Hamlet?

4. What do they say about Hamlet's mother?

5. What does the ghost want Hamlet to do?

6. The most famous quote from Hamlet is: *To be or not to be, that is the question*. It's the first line of his famous soliloquy. What's a soliloquy and what is it used for?



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KEY

1. Compare the original text with the modern version, and find the equivalents.
 - a. Hast Have
 - b. Thou You
 - c. Thy Your
 - d. List Listen
 - e. Pity me not Don't pity me
 - f. Mortals Ears of flesh and blood
 - g. Haste me to know't Hurry and tell me about it
 - h. Thee You are
 - i. A serpent stung me A snake bit me
 - j. Ay Yes
 - k. Thou noble youth My noble son
 - l. Methinks I think
 - m. I scent I smell
 - n. Howsoever however

2. Who is the ghost? Hamlet's father

3. What does the ghost tell Hamlet? He says that Hamlet's father has killed him by pouring poison in his ear.

4. What do they say about Hamlet's mother? They say she has been seduced by Hamlet's uncle, but they add that if she had been virtuous, she wouldn't have fallen.

5. What does the ghost want Hamlet to do? He wants Hamlet to take revenge.

6. The most famous quote from Hamlet is: *To be or not to be, that is the question*. It's the first line of his famous soliloquy. What's a soliloquy and what is it used for?

When a character speaks his/her thoughts when he/she is alone or regardless of the audience, it's called a soliloquy. It's used to reveal the character's thoughts and show the audience what he/she really thinks.