PCPA Student Matinee Program
www.pcpa.org
Welcome to PCPA

A NOTE TO THE TEACHER
Thank you for bringing your students to PCPA at Allan Hancock College. Here are some helpful hints for your visit to the Marian Theatre. The top priority of our staff is to provide an enjoyable day of live theatre for you and your students. We offer you this study guide as a tool to prepare your students prior to the performance.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENT ETIQUETTE
Note-able behavior is a vital part of theater for youth. Going to the theater is not a casual event. It is a special occasion. If students are prepared properly, it will be a memorable, educational experience they will remember for years.

1. Have students enter the theater in a single file. Chaperones should be one adult for every ten students. Our ushers will assist you with locating your seats. Please wait until the usher has seated your party before any rearranging of seats to avoid injury and confusion. While seated, teachers should space themselves so they are visible, between every groups of ten students. Teachers and adults must remain with their group during the entire performance.

2. Once seated in the theater, students may go to the bathroom in small groups and with the teacher's permission. Please chaperone younger students. Once the show is over, please remain seated until the House Manager dismisses your school.

3. Please remind your students that we do not permit:
   - Food, gum, drinks, smoking, hats, backpacks or large purses
   - Disruptive talking.
   - Disorderly and inappropriate behavior (stepping on/over seats, throwing objects, etc.)
   - Cameras, iPods, cell phones, beepers, tape recorders, hand held video games. (Adults are asked to put any beepers or cell phones on silent or vibrate.) In cases of disorderly behavior, groups may be asked to leave the theater without ticket refunds.

Teachers should take time to remind students before attending the show of the following about a live performance: Sometimes we forget when we come into a theatre that we are one of the most important parts of the production. Without an audience there would be no performance. Your contribution of laughter, quiet attention and applause is part of the play.

When we watch movies or television we are watching images on a screen, and what we say or do cannot affect them. In the theatre the actors are real people who are present and creating an experience with us at that very moment. They see and hear us and are sensitive to our response. They know how we feel about the play by how we watch and listen. An invisible bond is formed between actors and a good audience, and it enables the actors to do their best for you. A good audience helps make a good performance.
The Study Guide is a companion piece designed to explore many ideas depicted in the stage production of *Hamlet*. Although the guide's intent is to enhance the student's theatrical experience, it can also be used as an introduction to the elements of a play, and the production elements involved in the play's presentation. Although some students may be familiar with the general storyline, each specific stage adaptation presents a wealth of new questions for this generation to answer.

Teachers and group leaders will want to select portions of the guide for their specific usage. Discussion questions are meant to provoke a line of thought about a particular topic. The answers to the discussion questions in many instances will initiate the process of exploration and discovery of varied interpretations by everyone involved. This can be as rewarding as the wonderful experience of sight and sound that *Hamlet* creates on-stage.

It is recommended that the Arden translation of William Shakespeare’s play, available in paperback at local libraries or book stores, be used in conjunction with discussion of the play. However, the discrepancies between various translations may also be useful for a discussion related to language, interpretation, and adaptation. You will find links to a number of free online versions of the text in the Resources and Further Information section of this guide.

As Hamlet is one of the longest plays ever written and when performed without cutting, it is nearly five hours in length, we have done some trimming of the story. After reading the play and seeing our performance, what sections did you notice are different? What specific scenes or characters have been cut from the PCPA production?

PCPA welcomes you and thanks you for being a partner in the live theatre experience. We hope that your visit will be a highlight of your school year.

Quinn Mattfeld* as Hamlet

*Member, Actors’ Equity Association
**Creative Team**

Director

Robin Delaurier

Fight Choreographer

Peter S. Hadres

Scenic Designer

Jack Shouse

Costume Designer

Frederick P. Deeben

Lighting Designer

Tamar Geist

Sound Designer

Walter T.J. Clissen

Stage Manager

Suzy Tyler

**Cast of Characters**

Hamlet

Quinn Mattfeld*

Claudius

Mark Booher

The Ghost / Player King / Priest

Michael Tremblay

Gertrude

Kitty Balay*

Polonius / Gravedigger

Peter S. Hadres*

Laertes

George Walker

Ophelia

Sierra Wells

Horatio

Michael Jenkinson*

Rosencrantz

Paul Henry

Guildenstern

Shannon Peters

Marcellus / Player

Kenny Bordieri

Barnardo / Player

Chris Perez

Francisca / Player

Melissa Ramirez

Osric

Kurt Haaker

Another Gravedigger

Robby Wagner

Player Queen

Sarah Ball

Boy Player

Allyson Hankins

Ensemble

Nik Johnson, Jacob Inman, Alyssa Anderson, Danielle Levin, Tiffany Horch, Savannah Hubbard, Cassandra Campbell, Paul Chavez, Cody Wittlinger, Lester McDaniel, Taylor Melville

*Member, Actors’ Equity Association
William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born in the prosperous Midland market town of Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. As the son of a merchant Glover and local politician, John Shakespeare, and Mary Arden, the daughter of a wealthy farmer, the young William, grew up in a large middle class family whose fortunes and position often fluctuated with the local economy. He probably attended what is now the Edward VI Grammar School, where he would have studied Latin literature. Married to a significantly older wife, Anne Hathaway, at the age of 18, William was a father of a daughter (Susannah) within 7 months of the wedding and twins within three years (Hamnet and Judith).

The 1580s saw Shakespeare as an active citizen in London pursuing a career with the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, a leading troop of players based at Philip Henslowe’s Globe Theatre. As both an actor and writer, and eventually a shareholder in the company, Shakespeare made his reputation with plays that ranged from tragedy and comedy to history and romance. He also composed narrative poetry and 154 sonnets that are supposedly autobiographical. Shakespeare’s life and career spanned the reigns of two influential and distinctly different monarchs, Elizabeth I (1558-1603) and James VI &I (1603-1625). Shakespeare’s company became the King’s Men in 1604-5, achieving the pinnacle of period sponsorship, royal patronage.

Following two and a half decades of financial and artistic success, Shakespeare returned to his hometown a wealthy citizen. He purchased significant properties, retired to a country gentleman’s life with a good reputation, a coat of arms, and cash. However, his only son had died in 1596, after a short illness; in a world based on primogeniture, Shakespeare’s fortune and name would not thrive. Shakespeare himself died of typhoid fever on April 23, 1616; he left most of his estate to his eldest daughter, Susannah and her husband, John Hall. He left his wife Anne, the couple’s second best bed. He is buried in the Stratford-upon-Avon’s Holy Trinity Church. Shakespeare enjoyed great popularity in his lifetime, and 400 years later, he is still the most produced playwright in the world.
About Hamlet

*Hamlet* is quite possibly the greatest English language play ever written by the greatest playwright. A revenge tragedy, Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* sometime between 1599 and early 1601. There were three different texts of the play published: 1602, First Quarto; 1604, Second Quarto; 1623, First Folio. Each version includes numerous lines and scenes that are missing from the others. It is the longest play Shakespeare wrote—running 4 1/2 to 5 hours when uncut. With 1,530 lines, Hamlet has more lines than any other character Shakespeare created. *Hamlet* has been performed more than any other play in the world and has had more written about it than any other literary work. “To be or not to be” is the most quoted phrase in the English language. *Hamlet* has inspired twenty-six ballets, six operas and dozens of musical works from Tchaikovsky and Liszt to Shostakovich. There have also been more than forty-five movie versions produced.

From its first recorded performance in 1602 by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, *Hamlet* has been performed continually all over the world. Shakespeare is noted to have played the Ghost in the first production. Some of the most remarkable actors to take on the tremendous role of Hamlet include: Richard Burbage, Sarah Bernhardt, John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier, Richard Burton, Peter O’Toole, Christopher Plummer, Ian McKellen, Ben Kingsley, Albert Finney, Kenneth Branagh, Alan Rickman, Mel Gibson, Ralph Fiennes, and Daniel Day-Lewis.

Shakespeare based *Hamlet* on a popular Elizabethan play by Thomas Kyd, *Ur-Hamlet*. There is no surviving copy of the play, however it is known that it was performed on the London stage in the 1580’s, it was a tragedy with a character named Hamlet and a ghost who cried “Hamlet, revenge!” While the myth of Hamlet has versions of which are found in Byzantine, Greek, and Roman mythology, Kyd and Shakespeare were most likely influenced by the Danish myth of Amleth. *Amleth* was written by Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish monk, around 1200 and published in his *Chronicles of the Danish Realm* in 1514. The Danish story is very close to Shakespeare’s. Feng murders his brother and marries Amleth’s mother, Gerutha. Amleth feigns madness to save himself, while Feng orders Amleth to be sent to England with guards who are carrying a death letter. Amleth alters the letter, returns to the kingdom, and burns down the Great Hall full of drunken nobles, including his uncle. His father’s murder is revenged with the death of his uncle Feng.
Synopsis of the Play

After the death of his beloved father King Hamlet, a grief-stricken Prince Hamlet returns home from his studies in Wittenburg to the Danish court at Elsinore. Hamlet senior’s brother, Claudius, has assumed the old king’s place as ruler of Denmark and as a second husband to Gertrude, Hamlet’s mother, with less than two months having passed since the king’s death. The prince, profoundly disturbed by the shocking speed of these events, struggles to find meaning in his radically altered world.

On a dark winter night, a ghost walks the walls of Elsinore. Discovered first by a pair of watchmen, Marcellus and Barnardo, then by the scholar Horatio, the ghost resembles the recently deceased King Hamlet. When Horatio brings Hamlet to see the ghost, it speaks to him, declaring that it is indeed his father’s spirit, and that he was murdered by Claudius. The old king’s ghost urges Hamlet to kill Claudius in revenge. Hamlet vows to his father to think of nothing else, but his restless intellect soon plunges him into uncertainty about the rightness of the deed he’s sworn to do. He comes up with a plan to act as if he is mad to conceal his true intentions from the new king while he seeks concrete proof of his guilt.

Claudius and Gertrude worry about the prince’s erratic behavior and attempt to discover its cause. Hamlet had shown a romantic interest in Ophelia, but her father, Polonius, intervened, insisting she reject the prince’s attentions. Hamlet’s subsequent odd behavior, especially with Ophelia, leads Polonius to conclude that he has been driven mad for want of her love. Claudius and Gertrude employ a pair of Hamlet’s friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to watch him. When Polonius suggests that Hamlet may be mad with love for his daughter, Ophelia, Claudius agrees to spy on Hamlet in conversation with the girl. But though Hamlet certainly seems mad, he does not seem to love Ophelia as he orders her to enter a nunnery and declares that he wishes to ban marriages.

A group of traveling actors comes to Elsinore, and Hamlet seizes upon an idea to test his uncle’s guilt. He will have the players perform a scene closely resembling the sequence by which Hamlet imagines his uncle to have murdered his father, so that if Claudius is guilty, he will surely react. When the moment of the murder arrives in the theater, Claudius leaps up and leaves the room. Hamlet and Horatio agree that this proves his guilt. Hamlet goes to kill Claudius but finds him praying. Since he believes that killing Claudius while in prayer would send Claudius’s soul to heaven, Hamlet considers that it would be an inadequate revenge and decides to wait. Claudius now frightened of Hamlet’s madness and fearing for his own safety, orders that Hamlet be sent to England at once.

Claudius sends Hamlet to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with a secret letter to the King of England demanding that Hamlet be put to death. But Hamlet outsmarts his enemies and makes his way back to Denmark, only to find that Ophelia, driven mad by his rejection and her father’s murder, has drowned under circumstances that suggest suicide. Laertes, her brother, who has been staying in France, returns to Denmark in a rage. Claudius convinces him that Hamlet is to blame for his father’s and
sister’s deaths. When Horatio and the king receive letters from Hamlet indicating that the prince has returned to Denmark after pirates attacked his ship en route to England, Claudius concocts a plan to use Laertes’ desire for revenge to secure Hamlet’s death. Laertes will fence with Hamlet in innocent sport, but Claudius will poison Laertes’ blade so that if he draws blood, Hamlet will die. As a backup plan, the king decides to poison a goblet, which he will give Hamlet to drink should Hamlet score the first or second hits of the match.

Hamlet returns to Denmark just as Ophelia’s funeral is taking place. Stricken with grief, he attacks Laertes and declares that he had in fact always loved Ophelia. Back at the castle, he tells Horatio that he believes one must be prepared to die, since death can come at any moment. A foolish courtier named Osric arrives on Claudius’s orders to arrange the fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes.

The sword-fighting begins. Hamlet scores the first hit, but declines to drink from the king’s proffered goblet. Instead, Gertrude takes a drink from it and is swiftly killed by the poison. Laertes succeeds in wounding Hamlet, though Hamlet does not die of the poison immediately. First, Laertes is cut by his own sword’s blade, and, after revealing to Hamlet that Claudius is responsible for the queen’s death, he dies from the blade’s poison. Hamlet then stabs Claudius through with the poisoned sword and forces him to drink down the rest of the poisoned wine. Claudius dies, and Hamlet dies immediately after achieving his revenge.

At this moment, a Norwegian prince named Fortinbras, who has led an army to Denmark and attacked Poland earlier in the play, enters with ambassadors from England, who report that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. Fortinbras is stunned by the gruesome sight of the entire royal family lying sprawled on the floor dead. He moves to take power of the kingdom. Horatio, fulfilling Hamlet’s last request, tells him Hamlet’s tragic story. Fortinbras orders that Hamlet be carried away in a manner befitting a fallen soldier.
Hamlet: The protagonist of the play and Prince of Denmark. Hamlet is the natural son of Queen Gertrude and the recently deceased King Hamlet. As a result of his mother’s hasty remarriage to Claudius, her former brother-in-law, Hamlet’s former uncle is now also his step-father and the new king. Hamlet’s keen wit, intellectual gifts, and natural tendency to question things make him an ideal candidate for the studies he has pursued at University in Wittenburg, but the events that bring him back home to Elsinore Castle have left him cynical and embittered. Hamlet is often indecisive and hesitant, but at other times prone to rash and impulsive acts.

Claudius: The antagonist of the play and the new King of Denmark. Claudius is the “smiling, damned villain” of the piece, a devious, lustful, and corrupt politician and master manipulator of people and circumstances. Despite the darkness in his soul, his seemingly genuine love for Gertrude and his pangs of conscience over his crimes add a more sympathetic dimension to his personality.

Gertrude: The Queen of Denmark and Hamlet’s mother. Gertrude’s secret affair with Claudius, her brother-in-law, culminates in their very public marriage. While Gertrude is a loving mother to Hamlet, her excessive sensuality and desire for social status motivate her immoral behavior.

Polonius: Lord Chamberlain of the Danish court and counselor to King Claudius. Polonius is the suspicious and controlling father of Ophelia and Laertes. He is a self-important, rather bumbling schemer and Claudius’ chief spy against Hamlet.
**The Ghost:** The spirit of King Hamlet, the Prince’s murdered father. The Ghost calls upon Hamlet to avenge his murder by killing Claudius, his uncle/step-father/King, but the true origin of this spirit is never made clear. Hamlet fears it may be have been sent by the devil to manipulate him into performing an evil act. Shakespeare is said to have played this role in the first production of Hamlet.

**Horatio:** Hamlet’s one true friend and trusted ally. They attended University in Wittenburg together. He has a calm, skeptical, and dispassionate outlook that helps to balance Hamlet’s intellectual and emotional excesses. Hamlet entrusts him with the task of telling his story to the world after his death.

**Ophelia:** Polonius’ young, beautiful, and emotionally vulnerable daughter, sister to Laertes and Hamlet’s love interest until he ruthlessly rejects her. Dutiful and obedient, Ophelia passively accepts her father’s and brother’s commands to reject Hamlet’s advances. She allows herself to be used as bait in the trap Polonius lays to spy on Hamlet. Her madness and subsequent death fuel her brother’s desire to take revenge on Hamlet.

**Laertes:** Son of Polonius and brother of Ophelia. Laertes’ rash and action-oriented approach to seeking revenge against Hamlet in the last acts of the play contrasts sharply with Hamlet’s brooding hesitancy over killing Claudius. In this way Laertes is a far more typical revenge tragedy figure than Hamlet.

**Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:** Former University friends of Hamlet who are brought to Elsinore by Claudius to try to find out the true cause of Hamlet’s apparent madness. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are pawns in a deadly game of political intrigue and revenge that they never fully comprehend.

**Marcellus:** Officer of the watch who first see the Ghost while on watch at Elsinore Castle with Barnadro. They enlist the aid of Horatio in telling Hamlet what they have seen.

**Barnardo:** Officer of the watch who first sees the Ghost while on watch with Marcellus.

**Francisca:** Guard at Elsinore Castle.

**Osric:** Courtier at Elsinore Castle who works directly for King Claudius.

**A Troupe of Players:** actors whose performance of *The Mousetrap* at court Hamlet uses to prove to himself Claudius’s guilt for the murder of his father.

**Gravedigger(s):** Men who, unbeknownst to Hamlet, are digging a grave for Ophelia
Shakespeare coined many words and phrases that are still part of the popular vernacular today. How many of these phrases do you use or hear on a regular basis? Did you know that they originated with Shakespeare? While reading and watching Hamlet take note of these phrases. Who says the phrase? In what context is it used? Do we use the phrase in the same way today as Shakespeare used it?

- All that glitters is not gold *(The Merchant of Venice)*("glisters")
- Bated breath *(The Merchant of Venice)*
- Better foot before ("best foot forward") *(King John)*
- Neither a borrower nor a lender be *(Hamlet)*
- Brave new world *(The Tempest)*
- Brevity is the soul of wit *(Hamlet)*
- Conscience does make cowards of us all *(Hamlet)*
- Come what come may ("come what may") *(Macbeth)*
- Dead as a doornail *(2 Henry VI)*
- Dog will have his day *(Hamlet)*
- Devil incarnate *(Titus Andronicus / Henry V)*
- Eaten me out of house and home *(2 Henry IV)*
- Flaming youth *(Hamlet)*
- For goodness' sake *(Henry VIII)*
- Jealousy is the green-eyed monster *(Othello)*
- Heart of gold *(Henry V)*
- Hoist with his own petard *(Hamlet)*
- In a pickle *(The Tempest)*
- In my heart of hearts *(Hamlet)*
- In my mind's eye *(Hamlet)*
- Infinite space *(Hamlet)*
- It smells to heaven *(Hamlet)*
- Knock knock! Who's there? *(Macbeth)*
- Love is blind *(Merchant of Venice)*
• Though this be madness, yet there is method in it ("There's a method to my madness") *(Hamlet)*
• Milk of human kindness *(Macbeth)*
• Ministering angel *(Hamlet)*
• Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows *(The Tempest)*
• More honored in the breach than in the observance *(Hamlet)*
• More in sorrow than in anger *(Hamlet)*
• More sinned against than sinning *(King Lear)*
• Murder most foul *(Hamlet)*
• Neither rhyme nor reason *(As You Like It)*
• Time is out of joint *(Hamlet)*
• Own flesh and blood *(Hamlet)*
• Star-crossed lovers *(Romeo and Juliet)*
• Parting is such sweet sorrow *(Romeo and Juliet)*
• [What] a piece of work [is man] *(Hamlet)*
• Primrose path *(Hamlet)*
• Sick at heart *(Hamlet)*
• Something wicked this way comes *(Macbeth)*
• A sorry sight *(Macbeth)*
• Such stuff as dreams are made on *(The Tempest)*
• Sweets to the sweet *(Hamlet)*
• There's the rub *(Hamlet)*
• To thine own self be true *(Hamlet)*
• Towering passion *(Hamlet)*
• Trippingly on the tongue *(Hamlet)*
• Wear my heart upon my sleeve *(Othello)*
• What fools these mortals be *(A Midsummer Night's Dream)*
• Witching time of night *(Hamlet)*
• The world's my oyster *(Merry Wives of Windsor)*

• addiction *(Henry V / Othello)*
• to arouse *(2 Henry VI / Hamlet; "rouse")
• assassination *(Macbeth)*
• bedazzled *(The Taming of the Shrew)*
• buzzer *(Hamlet)*
coldhearted (Antony and Cleopatra)
courtship (The Merchant of Venice)
critical (Othello)
dauntless (Macbeth)
distasteful (Timon of Athens)
distracted (Hamlet / Measure for Measure)
equivocal (Othello / All's Well that Ends Well)
excitement (Hamlet / Troilus and Cressida)
fanged (Hamlet, first attestation)
flowery (A Midsummer Night's Dream)
foppish (King Lear)
freezing (Cymbeline)
frugal (Much Ado About Nothing)
generous (Hamlet)
gloomy (Titus Andronicus)
hot-blooded (The Merry Wives of Windsor / King Lear)
hurry (Henry VI)
immediacy (King Lear)
inauspicious (Romeo and Juliet)
lackluster (As You Like It)
laughable (The Merchant of Venice)
lonely (Coriolanus)
lustrous (Twelfth Night / All's Well that Ends Well)
majestic (The Tempest)
mortifying (Merchant of Venice / Much Ado About Nothing)
motionless (Henry V)
outbreak (Hamlet)
perplex (King John / Cymbeline)
perusal (Sonnets / Hamlet)
rant (Hamlet)
radiance (King Lear)
shooting star (Richard II)
stealthy (Macbeth)
to swagger (II Henry IV)
traditional (Richard III; first use as adjective)
tranquil (Othello)
uncomfortable (Romeo and Juliet)
undress (The Taming of the Shrew)
to unhand (Hamlet)
unreal (Macbeth, first use of the negative)
viewless (Measure for Measure; means "invisible")
vulnerable (Macbeth; used in today's sense)
yelping (I Henry VI; first attestation of this adjectival form)
zany (Love's Labour Lost; a loan-word from Italian commedia dell'arte)
Scenic Design

Director, Roger DeLaurier, decided that in telling the story of *Hamlet*, he wanted to focus on the text as much as possible and did not want to over-design the show with large scenic elements. Scenic Designer, Jack Shouse, did just that by creating a simple and eloquent space for the players to inhabit. With archways to aid in entrance locations and movable mirrored panels, Mr. Shouse has given us a flexible world for Shakespeare’s characters to play inside.

These images are photos of the model that was built for the production. It is a replica in ¼ inch scale of the Marian Theatre and what our stage will look like. What part of the show do you think these images represent? How many locations could you create by moving the six panels? What orientation would you put the panels in to create Gertrude’s closet?
This is the paint elevation for the columns. The Scenic Designer creates this and sends it to the Charge Artist in the Paints Department so that they know how to paint the pieces that were constructed by Master Carpenters in our Scenic Shop.

Here are the carpenters installing the columns and mirrors onto the Marian Stage.
Lighting Design

With a minimalistic set, Lighting Designer, Tamar Geist, has the task of creating specific space and locations with light. While supporting the movement of the story telling, a lighting designer also aids in enhancing the mood, tone, time of day of a production, and of course, making sure that the actors are seen by the audience. How can light, or lack of light, help tell a story? Do you think *Hamlet* will be a brightly lit show? What colors might help tell this story?

As Tamar began her design process, these are some of the images that inspired her. What in these images are reflective of the Hamlet story for you?
PCPA’s production of *Hamlet* is set in contemporary Denmark. This allowed for Costume Designer, Fred Deeben, to create with modern colors and fashions. As Hamlet is a graduate student, what would he be wearing on a daily basis? How does the royal court dress?

Here are some of the costume renderings Fred created for the design process, alongside images of the actors in the actual costumes.

Sierra Wells as Ophelia, Hamlet’s love

Quinn Mattfeld* (left) as Hamlet and George Walker (right) as Laertes

Laertes’ time in Paris is reflected in his high fashion.

*Member, Actors’ Equity Association
Kitty Balay* (left) as Queen Gertrude and Quinn Mattfeld* as Prince Hamlet

*Member, Actors’ Equity Association
Questions & Activities

1. *Hamlet* is one of the most popular and produced of all of Shakespeare’s work. Why are we still staging this play 400+ years after Shakespeare wrote it? Why do you think PCPA wanted to share this play with the community?

2. *Hamlet* is the first true revenge play. What is a revenge play? What are the elements that make up a revenge play?

3. What is revenge? Is it ever justified? What needs does revenge satisfy?

4. There is an appearance of a ghost in *Hamlet*. What were some of the attitudes towards ghosts and the supernatural during Shakespeare’s time? And today? How does the use of a ghost function in telling the story?

5. How did the design team at PCPA create a ghost on stage?

6. Define hero. What makes someone a hero? Define tragic hero. What is a fatal flaw? What is the difference between a hero and a tragic hero? What is Hamlet’s tragic flaw?

7. What are the themes in *Hamlet*? How were the themes reflected in the design of the show?

8. Who is your favorite character in the play? Why? Which character do you relate most to? Who character do you dislike the most? Why?

9. Hamlet tells his friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, that he has lost his mirth? What does this mean? Have you ever lost your mirth? What did you do about it?

10. What is the nature of Hamlet and Ophelia’s relationship? How long have they known each other? How often do you think they send letters to each other? What evidence in the text is there to support their relationship? What do the other characters say about their relationship? Laertes? Polonius? Gertrude?

11. Ophelia and Hamlet end their relationship early on in the play. How does this break up affect them? How do others react to it?

12. What is melancholy? What is madness? What is the difference between them? Have you ever felt melancholy or madness? Which characters in the play are dealing with melancholy and madness?

13. Ophelia has a number of flowers during her final scene. She hands out daisies, rosemary, pansies, fennel, columbine, rue, and violets. What are the traditional meanings of these flowers? Do they still mean the same things in contemporary times?
And the death toll is...
Being a tragedy, and one of the greatest in history, there are a number of deaths in *Hamlet*. List all the characters who die, in order of their death, and how they died. What’s the body count at the end of the play? Which deaths were the most tragic? Is there a character you were surprised was still alive at the end of the play? Were any of the deaths in the play justified? Why?

Dealing with death is not easy. This is especially true when it is sudden and you don’t get to say goodbye to someone. Hamlet lost his father while away at school and never got a proper goodbye. Pretend you are Hamlet and write a letter to your father saying goodbye.

Hamlet also lost his first and only love, Ophelia, without being able to tell her his true feelings for her. From the perspective of Hamlet, write Ophelia a letter explaining your feelings for her.

Play within a Play
Inside *Hamlet* there are a number of theatrical moments. We meet a troupe of players, see a dumb show, talk about actors and their reputations, and even have Hamlet give a small acting lecture to the players.

What is metatheatre? What is a dumb show? Where do you find examples of both in *Hamlet*?

Looking at the role that acting plays in *Hamlet*, what are some of the different forms of acting in the play? Who is acting in the play? Why are they acting? What is the response to the acting?

When we meet the players, we learn a bit about their personalities and way of life. They are a traveling troupe of performers who get paid to share their stories. Who are the players? What kinds of people make up the troupe? What do you think their life is like as traveling performers? What do they need to travel with to create their performances? What kinds of plays do they do? What styles of acting do them employ?

What were some common opinions about actors in Shakespeare’s time? Have those opinions changed at all? What do you think about actors? Would you like to be part of a traveling performance troupe?

What does Hamlet tell the players before their performance? What does he believe is the use and power of the players and their performance?
Friendship and Loyalty
Hamlet has a number of complicated relationships. He is often questioning who he can trust and who will support him. Who is Hamlet’s best friend? Describe his relationship with Ophelia, Horatio, Laertes, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Which of his friends does he share the most with? Who is loyal and supportive? Is Hamlet a good friend?

Quotable Quotes
Hamlet is the most quoted of all Shakespeare’s plays. Below is a list of some of the most important quotes. What do they mean? How are they relevant in your life today? When and where have you seen these quotes aside from Hamlet? Translate the lines into contemporary language and see how often you use these phrases.

To thine own self be true

The lady doth protests too much methinks

To be or not to be, that is the question
   To die, to sleep -
   To sleep, perchance to dream - ay, there’s the rub,
   For in this sleep of death what dreams may come...

Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t.

Now cracks a noble heart. Good-night, sweet prince;
   And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

When sorrows come, they come not single spies. But in battalions!

   Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice.

   I must be cruel only to be kind;
   Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.

To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

   What a piece of work is a 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?”

**Directing Hamlet**
If you were to direct a production of *Hamlet* using famous living actors, who would you cast in each of the major roles? Why would you choose these actors? What characteristics are you looking for with each character? If you were to write a list of qualities that you are looking for in your casting, what would they be?

**Example:**
Ophelia  Young, beautiful, obedient, smart, caring

One of the great things about Shakespeare is how relevant his stories are today. What setting would you place your production of *Hamlet*? The Renaissance? Ancient Greece? The 1960s? Why?

After you have chosen a setting, what about costumes? What would Hamlet wear? How would the King and Queen be dressed for their wedding party?

**Hamlet and Social Networking**
Today it is odd for someone not to be on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram. PCPA’s production of *Hamlet* is set in contemporary times so it’s fair to conclude that the characters would be using the internet.

1. Who is your favorite character?
2. What would your screen name be for this character on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?
3. If your character had a blog, what would the title be?
4. On the day of the wedding of Claudius and Gertrude, what would your character post?
5. Which other characters in the play would your character be friends with or following? What things would you post on their page? Who would you block from our page?
Shakespeare Plays Crossword

Across
3. Much Ado About ________
7. The Taming of the ________
9. The _________ of Errors.
10. Hamlet, Prince of _________
12. The _________ of Venice.

Down
1. As You ______ It.
2. Love's Labours ______
4. The Two _________ of Verona.
5. The _________'s Tale
6. A Midsummer-Night's ______
8. The Merry Wives of _________
11. ______ Lear.
William Shakespeare Word Search

Anne Hathaway  Bard of Avon  comedy

couplets  Elizabethan  First Folio

Globe Theatre  history  Kings Men

playwright  poetry  sonnets

Stratford upon Avon  tragedy  William Shakespeare
Resources and Further Research

Watch Hamlet - Movie Versions

1948 Directed by and starring Laurence Olivier
1969 Richard Burton as Hamlet, directed by John Gielgud, filmed during a live performance on Broadway
1969 Nicol Williamson as Hamlet, directed by Tony Richardson
1979 Derek Jacobi as Hamlet, directed by Rodney Bennet for the BBC
1990 Mel Gibson as Hamlet, directed by Franco Zeffirelli
1996 Directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh
2000 Ethan Hawke as Hamlet, directed by Michael Almereyda, set in present day New York.

Find Hamlet and Shakespeare on the Web

ShakespeareMag.com www.shakespearemag.com
NEA Shakespeare in America www.shakespeareinamericancommunities.org
Shakespeare in the Classroom www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators
Royal Shakespeare Company www.rsc.org.uk
Shakespeare’s Globe www.shakespearesglobe.com
Folger Shakespeare Library www.folger.edu
Shakespeare Resource Center www.bardweb.net
Mr. William Shakespeare www.shakespeare.palomar.edu
The Shakespeare Web www.shakespeare.com
The Complete Works www.shakespeare.mit.edu
Shakespeare Online www.shakespeare-online.com

Shakespeare Festival Theatre Companies

California Shakespeare Festival www.calshakes.org
Oregon Shakespeare Festival www.osfashland.org
Utah Shakespeare Festival www.bard.org
Shakespeare in the Park www.shakespeareinthehowardpark.org
Shakespeare Theatre Company www.shakespearetheatre.org
Alabama Shakespeare Festival www.asf.net
Great River Shakespeare Festival www.grsf.org
Idaho Shakespeare Festival www.idahoshakespeare.org

Books and Plays Inspired by Hamlet

Gertrude and Claudius by John Updike
The Dead Fathers Club by Matt Haig
The Story of Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski
Fortinbras by Lee Blessing
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead by Tom Stoppard
I Hate Hamlet by Paul Rudnick
They All Want to Play Hamlet by Carl Sandburg