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Tom Hiddleston

British actor

Alternate titles: Thomas William Hiddleston

Written by Everett Munoz

Fact-checked by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

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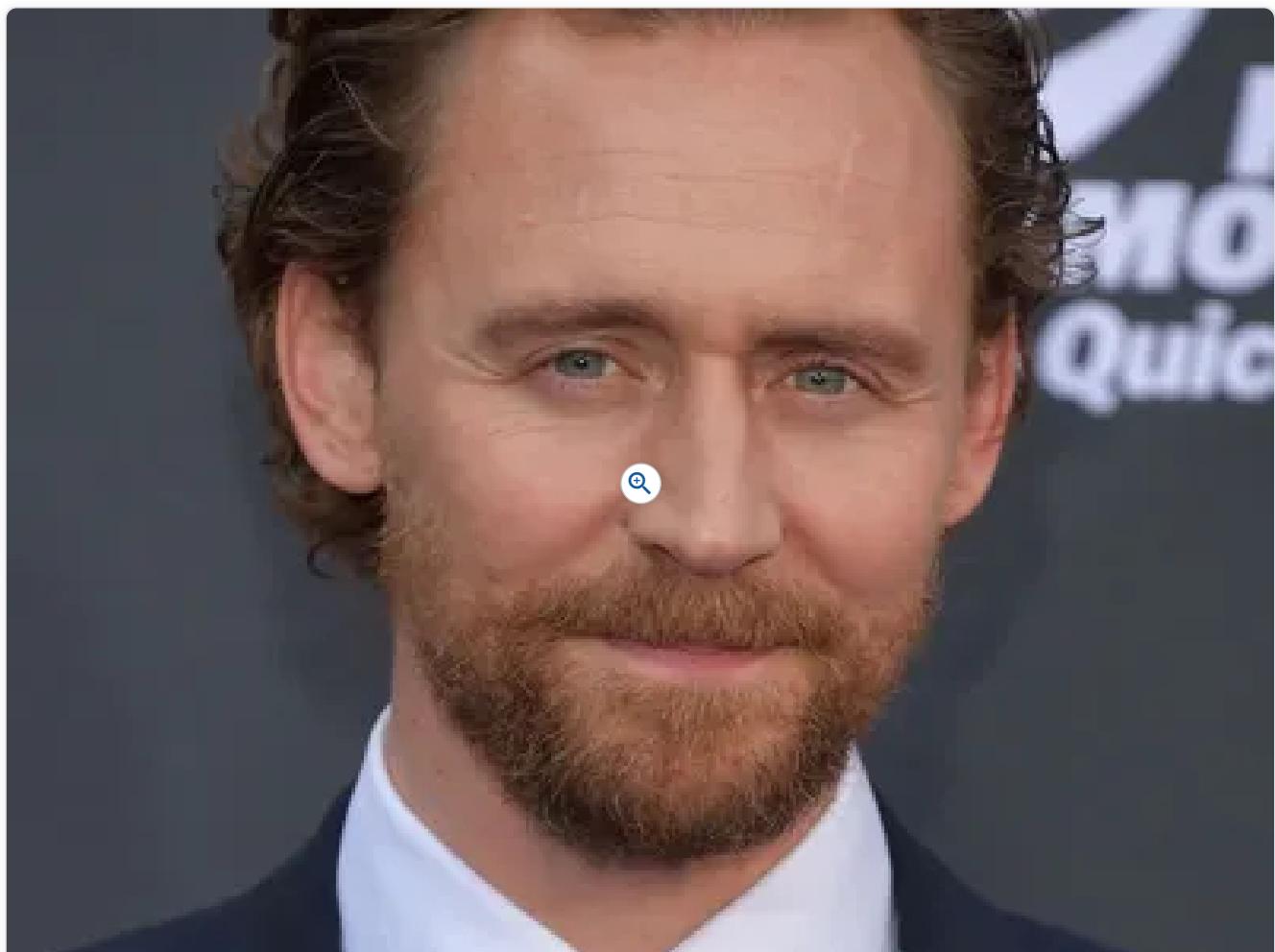


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Tom Hiddleston

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Born: February 9, 1981 (age 42) • London • England

Awards And Honors: Golden Globe Award • Golden Globe Award (2017): Best Actor in a Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television

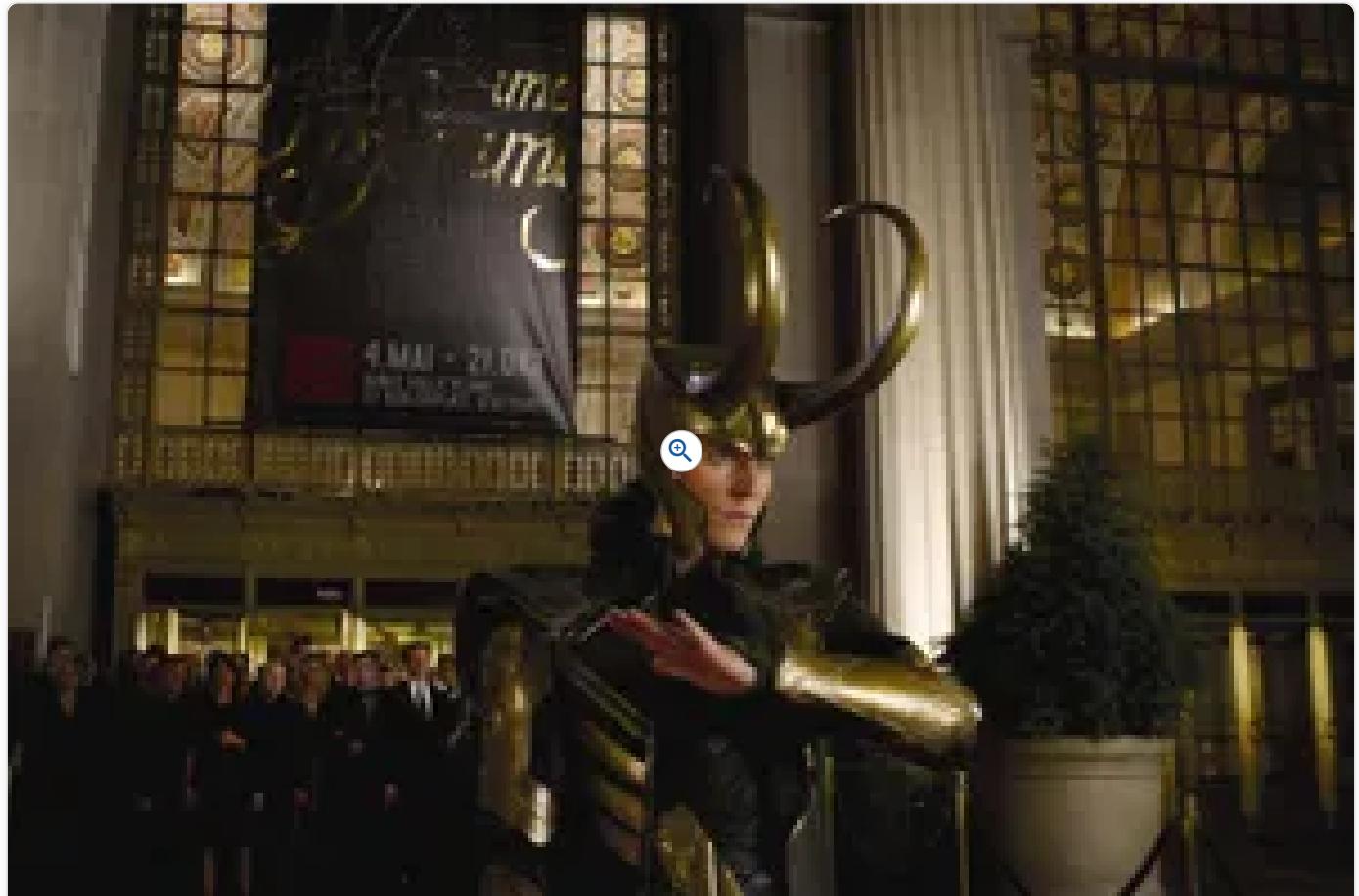
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Tom Hiddleston, in full **Thomas William Hiddleston**, (born February 9, 1981, London, England), classically trained English actor, known for his roles in the television series *Homeland* (2011–15) and *Thor: The Dark World* (2013). He also appeared in the films *Red Dawn* (2012), *Maleficent* (2014), *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015), *Ant-Man* (2015), *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018), *Avengers: Endgame* (2019), *Knives Out* (2019), *Spider-Man: Far from Home* (2019), *Knives Out 2* (2023), and *Thor: Love and Thunder* (2022).

Hiddleston was raised in [Wimbledon](#), London, by his father, James, a managing director of a pharmaceutical company, and his mother, Diana, who performed in theatre. They divorced when Hiddleston was 13 years old. He and his sisters, like their mother, all had an interest in the arts: Emma Hiddleston later became an actor, and Sarah Hiddleston worked as a producer and visual effects manager in film.

Hiddleston attended [Eton College](#) in Windsor, where he played rugby, and went on to study classics at the [University of Cambridge](#). While performing in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Hiddleston caught the attention of a talent agency and made his professional acting debut in the 2001 television [adaptation](#) of *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*. Hiddleston then attended the [Royal Academy of Dramatic Art](#) in London and graduated in 2005.

In 2007 Hiddleston appeared in his first feature film, *Unrelated*, with his sister Emma Hiddleston. That same year, he also played Posthumus in a stage production of William Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, for which he won the [Laurence Olivier](#) Award for the best newcomer in a play. Hiddleston also had roles in *Othello* (2007) and Anton Chekhov's *Ivanov* (2008). Hiddleston then appeared alongside his *Ivanov* costar [Kenneth Branagh](#) in the BBC series *Wallander* (2008–11).



[The Avengers](#)

In 2011 Hiddleston auditioned for the title role of [Thor](#) in the Marvel film of the same name, but Branagh, who was directing, cast him as the loveable villain Loki instead. Hiddleston continued to play the [mischievous](#) character in films such as *The Avengers*.

(2012), *Thor: The Dark World* (2013), *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017), and *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018). He also played Loki in the television show *Loki* (2021–) and voiced the character in the animated television series *What If...?* (2021) and in *The Simpsons* short films *The Good, The Bart, and the Loki* (2021) and *Welcome to the Club* (2022).

Outside of his performances as Loki, Hiddleston appeared in the movies *Midnight in Paris* (2011), *War Horse* (2011), *The Deep Blue Sea* (2011), and *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013) as well as in *The Hollow Crown* (2012–16), a miniseries adapting Shakespeare's history plays, *Richard II*, *Henry IV: Part 1*, *Henry IV: Part 2*, and *Henry V*. Meanwhile Hiddleston continued to act onstage, starring as the titular character in a production of *Coriolanus* (2013). He later earned enthusiastic reviews for his performance as [Hank Williams](#) in the biopic *I Saw the Light* (2015), though the film was not well received.



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In 2016 Hiddleston was cast as the lead character Jonathan Pine in the television series *The Night Manager* (2016), for which he won a [Golden Globe Award](#) for best actor in a limited series. Onstage he starred in Branagh's 2017 production of *Hamlet* and made his Broadway [debut](#) in 2019 with *Betrayal*, for which he earned a [Tony Award](#) nomination for best actor. He began a long-term relationship with his *Betrayal* costar Zawe Ashton, with whom he has a child.

Hiddleston has also served as a narrator for both audiobooks and television. Earlier in his career, he was the narrator of the documentary *Galapagos Island* (2006) and the audiobook (2007) of the *Red Necklace* by Sally Gardner. Hiddleston later did the voice-over for the nature documentary *Earth at Night in Color* (2020).

 Everett Munoz

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Hamlet

work by Shakespeare

Alternate titles: "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark"

Written by [David Bevington](#)

Fact-checked by [The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica](#)

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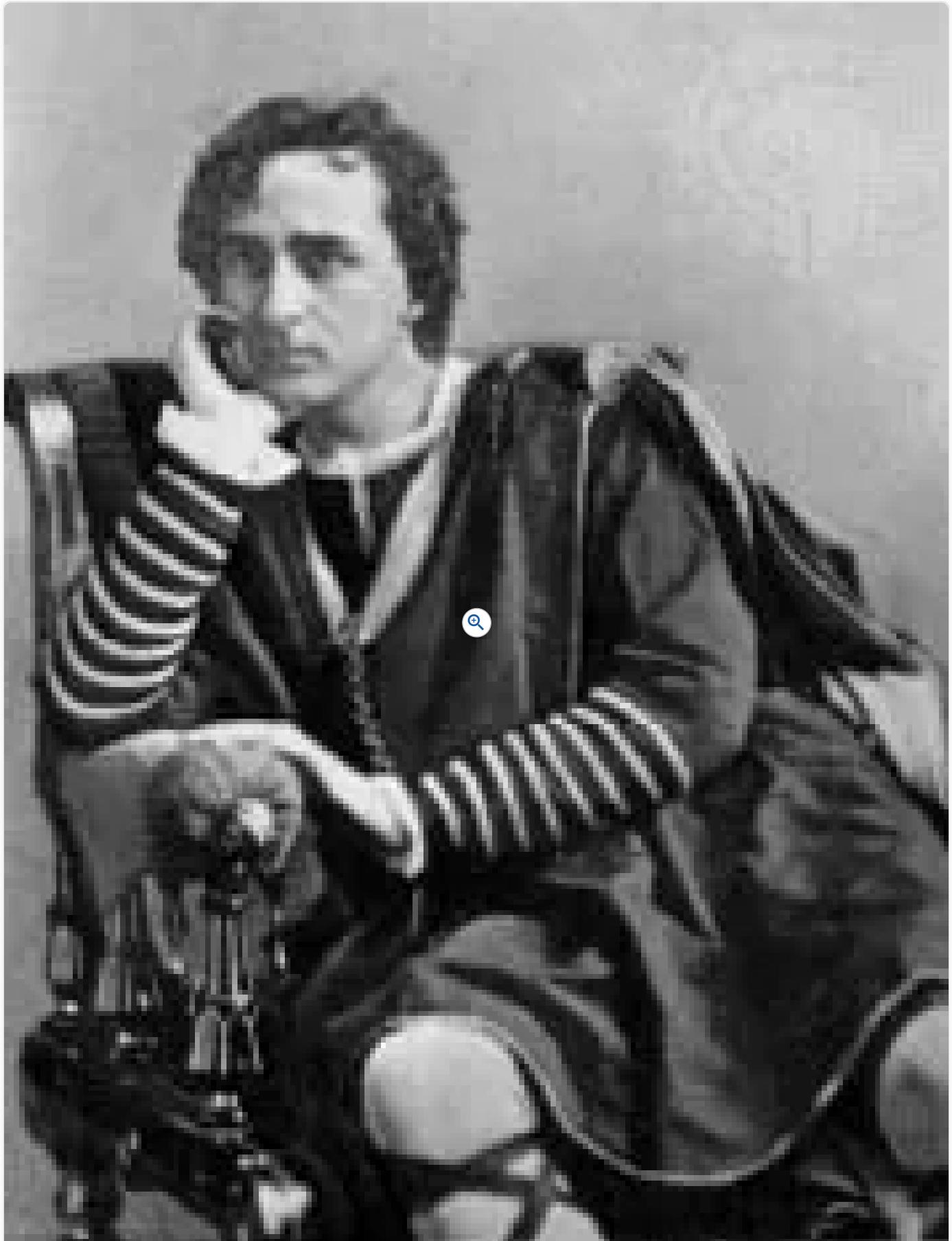
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Hamlet

Hamlet, in full **Hamlet, Prince of Denmark**, tragedy in five acts by [William Shakespeare](#), written about 1599–1601 and published in a quarto edition in 1603 from an unauthorized text, with reference to an earlier play. The [First Folio](#) version was taken from a second quarto of 1604 that was based on Shakespeare's own papers with some [annotations](#) by the bookkeeper.



Shakespeare's telling of the story of [Prince Hamlet](#) was derived from several sources, notably from Books III and IV of [Saxo Grammaticus](#)'s 12th-century *Gesta Danorum* and from volume 5 (1570) of *Histoires tragiques*, a free translation of Saxo by François de Belleforest. The play was evidently preceded by another play of Hamlet (now lost), usually referred to as the *Ur-Hamlet*, of which [Thomas Kyd](#) is a conjectured author.



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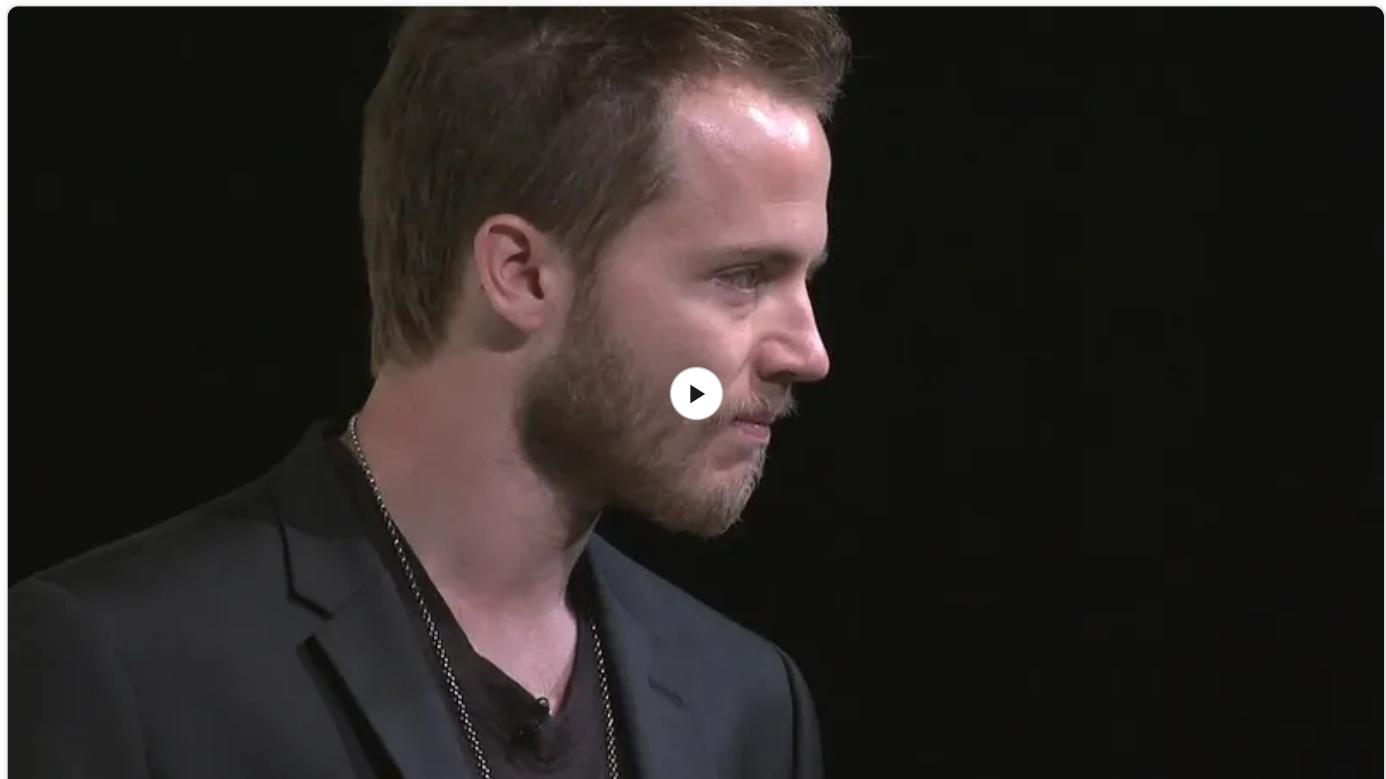
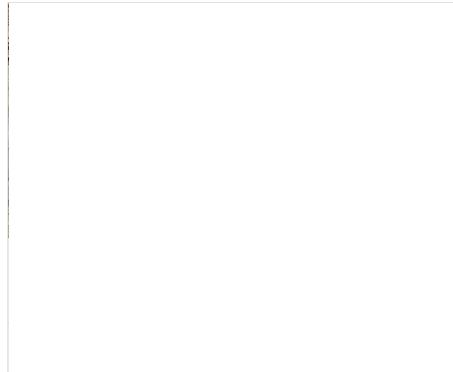
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As Shakespeare's play opens, [Hamlet](#) is mourning his father, who has been killed, and lamenting the behaviour of his mother, [Gertrude](#), who married his uncle [Claudius](#) within a month of his father's death. The [ghost](#) of his father appears to Hamlet, informs him that he was poisoned by Claudius, and commands Hamlet to avenge his death. Though instantly [galvanized](#) by the ghost's command, Hamlet decides on further reflection to seek evidence in corroboration of the ghostly visitation, since, he knows, the [Devil](#) can assume a pleasing shape and can easily mislead a person whose mind is perturbed by intense grief. Hamlet adopts a guise of melancholic and mad behaviour as a way of deceiving Claudius and others at court—a guise made all the easier by the fact that Hamlet is genuinely melancholic.



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Hamlet's dearest friend, Horatio, agrees with him that Claudius has unambiguously confirmed his guilt. Driven by a guilty [conscience](#), Claudius attempts to [ascertain](#) the cause of Hamlet's odd behaviour by hiring Hamlet's onetime friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on him. Hamlet quickly sees through the scheme and begins to act the part of a madman in front of them. To the pompous old courtier [Polonius](#), it appears that Hamlet is lovesick over Polonius's daughter [Ophelia](#). Despite Ophelia's loyalty to him, Hamlet thinks that she, like everyone else, is turning against him; he feigns madness with her also and treats her cruelly as if she were representative, like his own mother, of her "treacherous" sex.

Hamlet contrives a plan to test the ghost's accusation. With a group of visiting actors, Hamlet arranges the performance of a story representing circumstances similar to those described by the ghost, under which Claudius poisoned Hamlet's father. When the play is presented as planned, the performance clearly unnerves Claudius.



Watch Hamlet's tragic protagonist confront his mother, Queen Gertrude, and accidentally kill Polonius[See all videos for this article](#)

Moving swiftly in the wake of the actors' performance, Hamlet confronts his mother in her chambers with her [culpable](#) loyalty to Claudius. When he hears a man's voice behind the curtains, Hamlet stabs the person he understandably assumes to be Claudius. The victim, however, is Polonius, who has been eavesdropping in an attempt to find out more about Hamlet's erratic behaviour. This act of violence persuades Claudius that his own life is in danger. He sends Hamlet to [England](#) escorted by [Rosencrantz and Guildenstern](#), with secret orders that Hamlet be executed by the king of England. When Hamlet discovers the orders, he alters them to make his two friends the victims instead.



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Upon his return to Denmark, Hamlet hears that Ophelia is dead of a suspected suicide (though more probably as a consequence of her having gone mad over her father's sudden death) and that her brother Laertes seeks to avenge Polonius's murder. Claudius is only too eager to arrange the duel. Carnage ensues. Hamlet dies of a wound inflicted by a sword that Claudius and Laertes have conspired to tip with poison; in the scuffle, Hamlet realizes what has happened and forces Laertes to exchange swords with him, so that Laertes too dies—as he admits, justly killed by his own treachery. Gertrude, also present at the duel, drinks from the cup of poison that Claudius has had placed near Hamlet to ensure his death. Before Hamlet himself dies, he manages to stab Claudius and to entrust the clearing of his honour to his friend Horatio.

For a discussion of this play within the [context](#) of Shakespeare's entire corpus, see [William Shakespeare: Shakespeare's plays and poems](#).

 David Bevington



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