

The Tragedy of
HAMLET
Prince of Denmark
By WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Edited by BARBARA A. MOWAT
and PAUL WERSTINE

Folger Shakespeare Library

<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>

Contents

Front Matter	From the Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library Textual Introduction Synopsis Characters in the Play
ACT 1	Scene 1 Scene 2 Scene 3 Scene 4 Scene 5
ACT 2	Scene 1 Scene 2
ACT 3	Scene 1 Scene 2 Scene 3 Scene 4
ACT 4	Scene 1 Scene 2 Scene 3 Scene 4 Scene 5 Scene 6 Scene 7
ACT 5	Scene 1 Scene 2

From the Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library

It is hard to imagine a world without Shakespeare. Since their composition four hundred years ago, Shakespeare's plays and poems have traveled the globe, inviting those who see and read his works to make them their own.

Readers of the New Folger Editions are part of this ongoing process of "taking up Shakespeare," finding our own thoughts and feelings in language that strikes us as old or unusual and, for that very reason, new. We still struggle to keep up with a writer who could think a mile a minute, whose words paint pictures that shift like clouds. These expertly edited texts are presented to the public as a resource for study, artistic adaptation, and enjoyment. By making the classic texts of the New Folger Editions available in electronic form as Folger Digital Texts, we place a trusted resource in the hands of anyone who wants them.

The New Folger Editions of Shakespeare's plays, which are the basis for the texts realized here in digital form, are special because of their origin. The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, is the single greatest documentary source of Shakespeare's works. An unparalleled collection of early modern books, manuscripts, and artwork connected to Shakespeare, the Folger's holdings have been consulted extensively in the preparation of these texts. The Editions also reflect the expertise gained through the regular performance of Shakespeare's works in the Folger's Elizabethan Theater.

I want to express my deep thanks to editors Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine for creating these indispensable editions of Shakespeare's works, which incorporate the best of textual scholarship with a richness of commentary that is both inspired and engaging. Readers who want to know more about Shakespeare and his plays can follow the paths these distinguished scholars have tread by visiting the Folger either in-person or online, where a range of physical and digital resources exists to supplement the material in these texts. I commend to you these words, and hope that they inspire.

Michael Witmore
Director, Folger Shakespeare Library

Textual Introduction

By Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine

Until now, with the release of the Folger Digital Texts, readers in search of a free online text of Shakespeare's plays had to be content primarily with using the Moby™ Text, which reproduces a late-nineteenth century version of the plays. What is the difference? Many ordinary readers assume that there is a single text for the plays: what Shakespeare wrote. But Shakespeare's plays were not published the way modern novels or plays are published today: as a single, authoritative text. In some cases, the plays have come down to us in multiple published versions, represented by various Quartos (Qq) and by the great collection put together by his colleagues in 1623, called the First Folio (F). There are, for example, three very different versions of *Hamlet*, two of *King Lear*, *Henry V*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and others. Editors choose which version to use as their base text, and then amend that text with words, lines or speech prefixes from the other versions that, in their judgment, make for a better or more accurate text.

Other editorial decisions involve choices about whether an unfamiliar word could be understood in light of other writings of the period or whether it should be changed; decisions about words that made it into Shakespeare's text by accident through four hundred years of printings and misprinting; and even decisions based on cultural preference and taste. When the Moby™ Text was created, for example, it was deemed "improper" and "indecent" for Miranda to chastise Caliban for having attempted to rape her. (See *The Tempest*, 1.2: "Abhorred slave,/Which any print of goodness wilt not take,/Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee..."). All Shakespeare editors at the time took the speech away from her and gave it to her father, Prospero.

The editors of the Moby™ Shakespeare produced their text long before scholars fully understood the proper grounds on which to make the thousands of decisions that Shakespeare editors face. The Folger Library Shakespeare Editions, on which the Folger Digital Texts depend, make this editorial process as nearly transparent as is possible, in contrast to older texts, like the Moby™, which hide editorial interventions. The reader of the Folger Shakespeare knows where the text has been altered because editorial interventions are signaled by square brackets (for example, from *Othello*: "[If she in

chains of magic were not bound,]”), half-square brackets (for example, from *Henry V*: “With [blood] and sword and fire to win your right,”), or angle brackets (for example, from *Hamlet*: “O farewell, honest <soldier.> Who hath relieved/you?”). At any point in the text, you can hover your cursor over a bracket for more information.

Because the Folger Digital Texts are edited in accord with twenty-first century knowledge about Shakespeare’s texts, the Folger here provides them to readers, scholars, teachers, actors, directors, and students, free of charge, confident of their quality as texts of the plays and pleased to be able to make this contribution to the study and enjoyment of Shakespeare.

Synopsis

Events before the start of *Hamlet* set the stage for tragedy. When the king of Denmark, Prince Hamlet's father, suddenly dies, Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, marries his uncle Claudius, who becomes the new king.

A spirit who claims to be the ghost of Hamlet's father describes his murder at the hands of Claudius and demands that Hamlet avenge the killing. When the councilor Polonius learns from his daughter, Ophelia, that Hamlet has visited her in an apparently distracted state, Polonius attributes the prince's condition to lovesickness, and he sets a trap for Hamlet using Ophelia as bait.

To confirm Claudius's guilt, Hamlet arranges for a play that mimics the murder; Claudius's reaction is that of a guilty man. Hamlet, now free to act, mistakenly kills Polonius, thinking he is Claudius. Claudius sends Hamlet away as part of a deadly plot.

After Polonius's death, Ophelia goes mad and later drowns. Hamlet, who has returned safely to confront the king, agrees to a fencing match with Ophelia's brother, Laertes, who secretly poisons his own rapier. At the match, Claudius prepares poisoned wine for Hamlet, which Gertrude unknowingly drinks; as she dies, she accuses Claudius, whom Hamlet kills. Then first Laertes and then Hamlet die, both victims of Laertes' rapier.

Characters in the Play

THE GHOST

HAMLET, Prince of Denmark, son of the late King Hamlet
and Queen Gertrude

QUEEN GERTRUDE, widow of King Hamlet, now married to Claudius

KING CLAUDIUS, brother to the late King Hamlet

OPHELIA

LAERTES, her brother

POLONIUS, father of Ophelia and Laertes, councillor to King Claudius

REYNALDO, servant to Polonius

HORATIO, Hamlet's friend and confidant

VOLTEMAND

CORNELIUS

ROSENCRANTZ

GUILDENSTERN

OSRIC

Gentlemen

A Lord

courtiers at the Danish court

FRANCISCO

BARNARDO

MARCELLUS

Danish soldiers

FORTINBRAS, Prince of Norway

A Captain in Fortinbras's army

Ambassadors to Denmark from England

Players who take the roles of Prologue, Player King, Player Queen,
and Lucianus in *The Murder of Gonzago*

Two Messengers

Sailors

Gravedigger

Gravedigger's companion

Doctor of Divinity

Attendants, Lords, Guards, Musicians, Laertes's Followers, Soldiers,
Officers

⟨ACT 1⟩

⟨Scene 1⟩

Enter Barnardo and Francisco, two sentinels.

FTLN 0001	BARNARDO	Who's there?	
	FRANCISCO		
FTLN 0002		Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.	
FTLN 0003	BARNARDO	Long live the King!	
FTLN 0004	FRANCISCO	Barnardo.	
FTLN 0005	BARNARDO	He.	5
	FRANCISCO		
FTLN 0006		You come most carefully upon your hour.	
	BARNARDO		
FTLN 0007		'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco.	
	FRANCISCO		
FTLN 0008		For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold,	
FTLN 0009		And I am sick at heart.	
FTLN 0010	BARNARDO	Have you had quiet guard?	10
FTLN 0011	FRANCISCO	Not a mouse stirring.	
FTLN 0012	BARNARDO	Well, good night.	
FTLN 0013		If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,	
FTLN 0014		The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.	

Enter Horatio and Marcellus.

	FRANCISCO		
FTLN 0015		I think I hear them.—Stand ho! Who is there?	15
FTLN 0016	HORATIO	Friends to this ground.	

FTLN 0017 MARCELLUS And liegemen to the Dane.
 FTLN 0018 FRANCISCO Give you good night.
 MARCELLUS
 FTLN 0019 O farewell, honest <soldier.> Who hath relieved
 FTLN 0020 you? 20
 FRANCISCO
 FTLN 0021 Barnardo hath my place. Give you good night.
Francisco exits.
 FTLN 0022 MARCELLUS Holla, Barnardo.
 FTLN 0023 BARNARDO Say, what, is Horatio there?
 FTLN 0024 HORATIO A piece of him.
 BARNARDO
 FTLN 0025 Welcome, Horatio.—Welcome, good Marcellus. 25
 HORATIO
 FTLN 0026 What, has this thing appeared again tonight?
 FTLN 0027 BARNARDO I have seen nothing.
 MARCELLUS
 FTLN 0028 Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy
 FTLN 0029 And will not let belief take hold of him
 FTLN 0030 Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us. 30
 FTLN 0031 Therefore I have entreated him along
 FTLN 0032 With us to watch the minutes of this night,
 FTLN 0033 That, if again this apparition come,
 FTLN 0034 He may approve our eyes and speak to it.
 HORATIO
 FTLN 0035 Tush, tush, 'twill not appear. 35
 FTLN 0036 BARNARDO Sit down awhile,
 FTLN 0037 And let us once again assail your ears,
 FTLN 0038 That are so fortified against our story,
 FTLN 0039 What we have two nights seen.
 FTLN 0040 HORATIO Well, sit we down, 40
 FTLN 0041 And let us hear Barnardo speak of this.
 FTLN 0042 BARNARDO Last night of all,
 FTLN 0043 When yond same star that's westward from the pole
 FTLN 0044 Had made his course t' illume that part of heaven
 FTLN 0045 Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself, 45
 FTLN 0046 The bell then beating one—

Enter Ghost.

MARCELLUS

FTLN 0047 Peace, break thee off! Look where it comes again.

BARNARDO

FTLN 0048 In the same figure like the King that's dead.

MARCELLUS, *['to Horatio']*

FTLN 0049 Thou art a scholar. Speak to it, Horatio.

BARNARDO

FTLN 0050 Looks he not like the King? Mark it, Horatio. 50

HORATIO

FTLN 0051 Most like. It *<harrows>* me with fear and wonder.

BARNARDO

FTLN 0052 It would be spoke to.

FTLN 0053 MARCELLUS Speak to it, Horatio.

HORATIO

FTLN 0054 What art thou that usurp'st this time of night, 55

FTLN 0055 Together with that fair and warlike form

FTLN 0056 In which the majesty of buried Denmark

FTLN 0057 Did sometimes march? By heaven, I charge thee,

FTLN 0058 speak.

MARCELLUS

FTLN 0059 It is offended.

FTLN 0060 BARNARDO See, it stalks away. 60

HORATIO

FTLN 0061 Stay! speak! speak! I charge thee, speak!

Ghost exits.

FTLN 0062 MARCELLUS 'Tis gone and will not answer.

BARNARDO

FTLN 0063 How now, Horatio, you tremble and look pale.

FTLN 0064 Is not this something more than fantasy?

FTLN 0065 What think you on 't? 65

HORATIO

FTLN 0066 Before my God, I might not this believe

FTLN 0067 Without the sensible and true avouch

FTLN 0068 Of mine own eyes.