

NOTES

analogy

- 93 Would have mourn'd longer—married with my uncle,  
94 My father's brother, but no more like my father  
95 Than I to Hercules. Within a month,  
96 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
97 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,  
98 She married—O most wicked speed: to post  
99 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets,  
100 It is not, nor it cannot come to good,  
101 But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

From Act II, Scene ii:

102 *Hamlet has been visited by an apparition claiming to be the ghost of his father, who urges Hamlet to avenge his father's murder. Hamlet swears he will obey, but hesitates. Watching a group of traveling players perform the murder of Priam, king of Troy, Hamlet compares one actor's passionate portrayal of Hecuba, Priam's grieving widow, to his own inaction.*

- 103 HAMLET: O, what a rogue and  
peasant slave am I!  
104 Is it not monstrous that this player  
here,  
105 But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,  
106 Could force his soul so to his own  
conceit  
107 That from her working all his visage  
wann'd,  
108 Tears in his eyes, distraction in his  
aspect,  
109 A broken voice, an' his whole function suiting  
110 With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing,  
111 For Hecuba!  
112 What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,  
113 That he should weep for her? What would he do  
114 Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
115 That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,  
116 And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,  
117 Make mad the guilty, and appall the free,  
118 Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed  
119 The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,  
120 A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak<sup>3</sup>  
121 Like John-a-dreams<sup>4</sup>, unpregnant of<sup>5</sup> my cause,



Hamlet, Horatio, Marcellus and the Ghost,  
engraving by Robert Thew, based on a  
painting by Henry Fuseli.

3. peak to mope  
4. John-a-dreams a nickname for a daydreamer  
5. unpregnant of unquicken, or unmoved, by



122 And can say nothing; no, not for a king,  
 123 Upon whose property and most dear life  
 124 A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?  
 125 Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,  
 126 Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face,  
 127 Tweaks me by the nose, gives me the lie i' the throat  
 128 As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?  
 129 Hah, 'swords, I should take it; for it cannot be  
 130 But I am pigeon-liver'd, and lack gall  
 131 To make oppression bitter, or ere this  
 132 I should 'a' fatted all the region kites  
 133 With this slave's offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!  
 134 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!  
 135 Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,  
 136 That I, the son of a dear father murdered,  
 137 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
 138 Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,  
 139 And fall a-cursing like a very drab,  
 140 A stallion. Fie upon't, foh!  
 141 About, my brains! Hum—I have heard  
 142 That guilty creatures sitting at a play  
 143 Have by the very cunning of the scene  
 144 Been struck so to the soul, that presently  
 145 They have proclaim'd their malefactions;  
 146 For murder, though it have no tongue,  
 147 Will speak with most miraculous organ. I'll have these players  
 148 Play something like the murder of my father  
 149 Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks,  
 150 I'll tent<sup>6</sup> him to the quick. If 'a do blench<sup>7</sup>,  
 151 I know my course. The spirit that I have seen  
 152 May be the dev'l; and the dev'l hath power  
 153 T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,  
 154 Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  
 155 As he is very potent with such spirits,  
 156 Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds  
 157 More relative than this—the play's the thing  
 158 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

From Act III, Scene i:

159 *Hamlet has been acting mad in front of his family and the court. The King and Polonius hope that Hamlet's strange behavior stems from his love for Ophelia.*

6. tent probe  
 7. blench flinch

#### SAMPLE ANNOTATION

#### Understanding Rhetoric – Rhetorical Devices

The word "relative" carries an ironic double meaning and captures the disdain Hamlet feels toward his uncle as he plans to use a play to trap him.

## SAMPLE ANNOTATION

## Comparative Reading

Analyzing different versions of Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" soliloquy can deepen your understanding of this specific moment in the play and how contemporary interpretations are influenced by the original text.

In the 1948 film version of the play, which features Laurence Olivier as Hamlet, the director was influenced by the content of the classic play, such as the phrase "sea of troubles," and sets the scene near the ocean. Hamlet also holds a dagger when he says "end them." The film makes Hamlet's suicidal thoughts more visible.

Polonius's daughter, Ophelia, and they spy on the young couple in order to confirm their suspicions. While hidden, they catch Hamlet in a private moment of anguished contemplation.

- 160 HAMLET: To be, or not to be, that is the question: to  
161 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
162 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
163 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
164 And by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep—  
165 No more, and by a sleep to say we end  
166 The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
167 That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation  
168 Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep—  
169 To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub,  
170 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
171 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
172 Must give us pause; there's the respect  
173 That makes calamity of so long life:  
174 For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
175 Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
176 The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,  
177 The insolence of office, and the spurns  
178 That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,  
179 When he himself might his quietus make  
180 With a bare bodkin<sup>8</sup>; who would fardels<sup>9</sup> bear,  
181 To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
182 But that the dread of something after death,  
183 The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn  
184 No traveller returns, puzzles the will,  
185 And makes us rather bear those ills we have,  
186 Than fly to others that we know not of?  
187 Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
188 And thus the native hue of resolution  
189 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
190 And enterprises of great pith and moment  
191 With this regard their currents turn awry,  
192 And lose the name of action.—Soft you now,  
193 The fair Ophelia!—Nymph, in thy orisons<sup>10</sup>  
194 Be all my sins remembered.
- 195 OPHELIA: Good my lord,

8. bare bodkin mere dagger

9. fardels a burden in the form of a bundle

10. orisons prayers



- 196 How does your honor for this many a day?
- 197 HAMLET: I humbly thank you. Well, well, well.
- 198 OPHELIA: My lord, I have remembrances of yours
- 199 That I have longed long to redeliver.
- 200 I pray you now receive them.
- 201 HAMLET: No, not I, I never gave you aught.
- 202 OPHELIA: My honored lord, you know right well you did,
- 203 And with them, words of so sweet breath composed
- 204 As made the things more rich. Their perfume lost,
- 205 Take these again, for to the noble mind
- 206 Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
- 207 There, my lord.
- 208 HAMLET: Ha, ha, are you honest?
- 209 OPHELIA: My lord?
- 210 HAMLET: Are you fair?
- 211 OPHELIA: What means your lordship?
- 212 HAMLET: That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.
- 213 OPHELIA: Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?
- 214 HAMLET: Ay, truly, for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.
- 215 OPHELIA: Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.
- 216 HAMLET: You should not have believed me, for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you not.
- 217 OPHELIA: I was the more deceived.
- 218 HAMLET: Get thee to a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me.

219 I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves, all. Believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

220 OPHELIA: At home, my lord.

221 HAMLET: Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool no where but in 's own house. Farewell.

222 OPHELIA: O, help him, you sweet heavens!

223 HAMLET: If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry. Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go. Farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go, and quickly too. Farewell.

224 OPHELIA: Heavenly powers, restore him!

225 HAMLET: I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God has given you one face and you make yourselves another. You jig and amble, and you lisp, you nickname God's creatures and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on 't. It hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages. Those that are married already, all but one, shall live. The rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.

226 [Exit HAMLET.]

227 OPHELIA: Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!—

228 The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,

229 Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state,

230 The glass of fashion and the mould of form,

231 Th' observed of all observers, quite, quite down!

232 And I, of ladies most deject and wretched;

233 That sucked the honey of his music vows,

234 Now see that noble and most sovereign reason

235 Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;

236 That unmatched form and feature of blown youth

237 Blasted with ecstasy. Oh, woe is me,

238 T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

From Act III, Scene iii:

A room in the Castle.



239 [Enter KING, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN.]

240 KING: I like him not; nor stands it safe with us  
241 To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;  
242 I your commission will forthwith dispatch,  
243 And he to England shall along with you:  
244 The terms of our estate may not endure  
245 Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow  
246 Out of his lunacies.

247 GUILDENSTERN: We will ourselves provide:  
248 Most holy and religious fear it is  
249 To keep those many many bodies safe  
250 That live and feed upon your majesty.

251 ROSENCRANTZ: The single and peculiar life is bound,  
252 With all the strength and armour of the mind,  
253 To keep itself from 'noyance; but much more  
254 That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest  
255 The lives of many. The cease of majesty  
256 Dies not alone; but like a gulf doth draw  
257 What's near it with it: it is a massy wheel,  
258 Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,  
259 To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
260 Are mortis'd, and adjoin'd; which, when it falls,  
261 Each small annexment, petty consequence,  
262 Attends the **boisterous** ruin. Never alone  
263 Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

264 KING: Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage;  
265 For we will fetters put upon this fear,  
266 Which now goes too free-footed.

267 ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN: We will haste us.

268 [Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.]

269 [Enter POLONIUS.]

270 POLONIUS: My lord, he's going to his mother's closet:  
271 Behind the arras I'll convey myself  
272 To hear the process; I'll warrant she'll tax him home.  
273 And, as you said, and wisely was it said,  
274 'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,  
275 Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear

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- 276 The speech, of vantage. Fare you well, my liege.
- 277 I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
- 278 And tell you what I know.
- 279 KING: Thanks, dear my lord.
- 280 [Exit POLONIUS.]
- 281 O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
- 282 It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,—
- 283 A brother's murder!—Pray can I not,
- 284 Though inclination be as sharp as will;
- 285 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
- 286 And, like a man to double business bound,
- 287 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
- 288 And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
- 289 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,—
- 290 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
- 291 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
- 292 But to confront the visage of offence?
- 293 And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
- 294 To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
- 295 Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up;
- 296 My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer
- 297 Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder!
- 298 That cannot be; since I am still possess'd
- 299 Of those effects for which I did the murder,
- 300 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
- 301 May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?
- 302 In the corrupted currents of this world
- 303 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
- 304 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
- 305 Buys out the law; but 'tis not so above;
- 306 There is no shuffling;—there the action lies
- 307 In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd,
- 308 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
- 309 To give in evidence. What then? what rests?
- 310 Try what repentance can: what can it not?
- 311 Yet what can it when one cannot repent?
- 312 O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
- 313 O limed soul, that, struggling to be free,
- 314 Art more engag'd! Help, angels! Make assay:
- 315 Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart, with strings of steel,





316 Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!  
317 All may be well.

318 *[Retires and kneels.]*

319 *[Enter Hamlet.]*

320 HAMLET: Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;  
321 And now I'll do't;—and so he goes to heaven;  
322 And so am I reveng'd,—that would be scann'd.  
323 A villain kills my father; and for that,  
324 I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
325 To heaven.  
326 O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.  
327 He took my father grossly, full of bread;  
328 With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;  
329 And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven?  
330 But in our circumstance and course of thought,  
331 'Tis heavy with him: and am I, then, reveng'd,  
332 To take him in the purging of his soul,  
333 When he is fit and season'd for his passage?  
334 No.  
335 Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent:  
336 When he is drunk asleep; or in his rage,  
337 Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed;  
338 At gaming, swearing; or about some act  
339 That has no relish of salvation in't;—  
340 Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven;  
341 And that his soul may be as damn'd and black  
342 As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays:  
343 This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

344 *[Exit.]*

345 *[The King rises and advances.]*

346 KING: My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:

347 Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

348 *[Exit.]*

