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Hamlet

SAMPLE



Shakespeare in Three Steps

by Rebekah Shafer

*An enjoyable and simple approach to
some of the greatest literature ever written—
the plays of William Shakespeare!*

Now you can help your students become familiar with Shakespeare's imaginative stories, memorable characters, and brilliant lines in **three simple steps: read the story, hear the script, and watch the play.**

Shakespeare in Three Steps provides everything you need:

- **A well-written story version of the play** by E. Nesbit or Charles and Mary Lamb—classic narratives that have been providing a wonderful introduction to Shakespeare's plays for decades;
- **The complete script of the play** with helpful notes to explain unusual terms or add to your understanding of Shakespeare's stories, characters, and lines;
- **An outlined plan for walking through the script**, divided into manageable portions with quick recaps, scene introductions, and summaries that will guide you each step of the way;
- **Script highlights**, featuring well-known or just ponder-worthy lines, that will gently introduce the Bard's genius and cultivate an appreciation for his wonderful way with words;
- **Parental advisories** to give you a heads-up on scenes that may contain material inappropriate for children;
- **Helpful lists** of the characters in the scenes and the number of lines each one speaks, so you can assign parts knowledgeably for reading sessions or acting roles;
- **Candid reviews** of several video recordings of the play to save you time previewing and help you select a suitable presentation for your students to watch and enjoy.

“To become intimate with Shakespeare in this way is a great enrichment of mind and instruction of conscience”—Charlotte Mason

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Shakespeare in Three Steps

Hamlet

by Rebekah Shafer

Recommended for Grades 9–12

Tragedy

Summary: Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is the dramatic tale of a king who was murdered by his brother and returned as a ghost to send his son, Prince Hamlet, on a mission of revenge. But, though passionate about avenging his father, Hamlet was more scholar than fighter and not suited to such a task. In the process of wrestling with his own life and perspectives, many additional lives were lost. Was it justice? A tragic waste? Let the reader decide.

Note: This is the longest of Shakespeare's plays, so this guide has more (and longer) lessons than other Shakespeare in Three Steps guides. Allow extra time to finish it.

Shakespeare in Three Steps: Hamlet
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ISBN 978-1-61634-585-3 printed
ISBN 978-1-61634-586-0 electronic download

Published by
Simply Charlotte Mason, LLC
930 New Hope Road #11-892
Lawrenceville, Georgia 30045
simplycharlottesmason.com

Printed by PrintLogic, Inc.
Monroe, Georgia, USA

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Shakespeare in Three Steps

Understand and enjoy Shakespeare's plays by following these three steps:

Step 1: Read the story.

Read aloud the story version of the play to become familiar with the main characters and plot.

Step 2: Hear the script.

Listen to each scene on the audio dramatization and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves.

Step 3: Watch the play.

Enjoy a live or recorded presentation of the play.

Character List

for Shakespeare's *The Tragical History of Hamlet Prince of Denmark*

- **King Claudius**, Hamlet's uncle, king of Denmark
- **Queen Gertrude**, Hamlet's mother
- **Hamlet**, son of the late, and nephew of the present, king
- **Ghost of Hamlet's father**, late king of Denmark
- **Polonius**, councilor to King Claudius
- **Ophelia**, Polonius' daughter
- **Laertes**, Polonius' son
- **Reynaldo**, Polonius' servant
- **Horatio**, Hamlet's friend
- **Rosencrantz**, childhood friend of Hamlet
- **Guildenstern**, childhood friend of Hamlet
- **Voltemand**, Danish ambassador
- **Cornelius**, Danish ambassador
- **Osrice**, courtier
- A priest
- **Marcellus**, soldier
- **Barnardo**, soldier
- **Francisco**, soldier
- Troupe of players
- Two clowns, one a gravedigger
- **Fortinbras**, prince of Norway
- A Norwegian captain in Fortinbras' army
- English ambassadors
- Various lords, ladies, sailors, gentlemen, messengers, and attendants

Step 1: Read the story.

Hamlet is a story of intrigue, family honor, and revenge. Read aloud the story version of *Hamlet* below to become familiar with the main characters and plot. A Character List is included on page 6 to help students keep track of the numerous characters, but you can always allow your students to create their own. Students might also personalize the list by adding character descriptions, color-coding the various characters according to the students' devised categories, drawing caricatures of the characters, rating the characters on a devised scale, and more. Feel free to divide the story into two readings.

Hamlet

(From *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare for Children* by E. Nesbit)

Hamlet was the only son of the King of Denmark. He loved his father and mother dearly—and was happy in the love of a sweet lady named Ophelia. Her father, Polonius, was the King's Chamberlain.

While Hamlet was away studying at Wittenberg, his father died. Young Hamlet hastened home in great grief to hear that a serpent had stung the King, and that he was dead. The young Prince had loved his father so tenderly that you may judge what he felt when he found that the Queen, before yet the King had been laid in the ground a month, had determined to marry again—and to marry the dead King's brother.

Hamlet refused to put off mourning for the wedding.

"It is not only the black I wear on my body," he said, "that proves my loss. I wear mourning in my heart for my dead father. His son at least remembers him, and grieves still."

Then said Claudius the King's brother, "This grief is unreasonable. Of course you must sorrow at the loss of your father, but—"

"Ah," said Hamlet, bitterly, "I cannot in one little month forget those I love."

With that the Queen and Claudius left him, to make merry over their wedding, forgetting the poor good King who had been so kind to them both.

And Hamlet, left alone, began to wonder and to question as to what he ought to do. For he could not believe the story about the snake-bite. It seemed to him all too plain that the wicked Claudius had killed the King, so as to get the crown and marry the Queen. Yet he had no proof, and could not accuse Claudius.

And while he was thus thinking came Horatio, a fellow student of his, from Wittenberg.

"What brought you here?" asked Hamlet, when he had greeted his friend kindly.

"I came, my lord, to see your father's funeral."

"I think it was to see my mother's wedding," said Hamlet, bitterly. "My father! We shall not look upon his like again."

"My lord," answered Horatio, "I think I saw him yesternight."

Step 2: Hear the script.

Make a copy of the script on pages 51–189 for each student. Work your way through the script over several sittings, as outlined on the following pages. Each lesson will follow a sequence similar to the one below:

1. Use the notes to introduce each scene. Highlight the featured lines if desired.
2. Listen to the scene(s) on the audio dramatization and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves.
3. Invite any questions or comments, then set it aside until next time.

Notes

We recommend The Arkangel Shakespeare audio dramatizations. Check your local library or favorite online bookstore.

Hamlet is the longest of Shakespeare's plays, so allow more time to work through the lessons and be careful not to rush through it. In your planning, take into consideration the number of lessons and their length, and be sure to give your students ample thinking time to ponder the ideas.

Notes

Shakespeare wrote his plays in both prose (conversational speaking) and poetry.

NAME: Prose lines will look like this.

*NAME
Poetry lines will look like this.*

Sometimes Shakespeare would split a line of poetry between two or more characters. Horatio's line, "A piece of him," finishes Bernardo's previous line, "What, is Horatio there?" so it is moved to the right to visually show the completion of the line.

Act I, Scene 1

- ❑ Ask the students what they recall from the previous lesson's reading of the story of *Hamlet*. Explain that the play divides the story into five parts, called "acts." The acts are divided into smaller portions, called "scenes." Today they will listen to Act I, Scene 1. Read the scene summary to give the students the context for the lines they will be hearing.

Scene Summary: At midnight, during the changing of the guard around the royal palace, two guards are startled by a ghostly apparition.

- ❑ Distribute a copy of the script to each student.
- ❑ (Optional) Take a sneak peek at these lines from the script and enjoy Shakespeare's wording.
 - » Lines 18–30: The night guards, Bernardo and Marcellus, are nervous after seeing what they thought was a ghost on the previous two nights. They have called in Horatio to witness the reported apparition on the third night.

BERNARDO Say—
What, is Horatio there?

HORATIO: A piece of him.

BERNARDO
Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.

HORATIO
What, has this thing appeared again to-night?

BERNARDO
I have seen nothing.

MARCELLUS
Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us.
Therefore I have entreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this night,
That, if again this apparition come,

He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

HORATIO

Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

- ❑ Listen to Act I, Scene 1, on the audio dramatization (approx. 9 minutes) and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves. If you are assigning students to read aloud, the following list might be helpful; it details the characters who speak and the approximate number of lines each one has in this scene.

- Bernardo, soldier (30 lines)
- Francisco, soldier (8 lines)
- Horatio, Hamlet's friend (97 lines)
- Marcellus, soldier (40 lines)

Step 3: Watch the play.

Now that you and your students are familiar with the story line and the script, you are ready for the best part of this study: Watch a presentation of the play! Check for any local live performances that you could attend, or watch a video recording. (See video reviews below.)

Video Recording Reviews

- The 1948 classic, directed by Laurence Olivier and starring Laurence Olivier, John Laurie, and Jean Simmons, was filmed in black and white. The setting is Shakespeare's day with Elizabethan era costumes, which in this case means that Hamlet and other key figures are wearing tights. The pace of the movie is . . .

Additional complete reviews are found in the full book.

Notes

Be sure to do your research to avoid any unpleasant surprises when watching Shakespeare productions. Unfortunately, some directors feel compelled to elaborate on the text, adding suggestive gestures or inappropriate actions. Preview any video presentation and check with someone who is directly involved with any live production to find out how it aligns with the original script and how appropriate it is for children.

Many recorded presentations and versions of Hamlet exist, since it is arguably Shakespeare's most popular play. The reviews given here reflect the versions deemed most easily accessible for parents at the time of this book's publication.

The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

Notes

Act I, Scene 1

Setting: Elsinore Castle. A platform before the castle.

Enter Bernardo and Francisco, two sentinels.

BERNARDO: Who's there?

FRANCISCO

Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.

BERNARDO: Long live the king!

FRANCISCO: Bernardo?

BERNARDO: He.

5

FRANCISCO

You come most carefully upon your hour.

BERNARDO

'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco.

FRANCISCO

For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.

BERNARDO

Have you had quiet guard?

10

FRANCISCO:

Not a mouse stirring.

BERNARDO

Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

FRANCISCO

I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who is there?

Enter Horatio and Marcellus.

HORATIO

Friends to this ground.

15

MARCELLUS:

And liegemen to the Dane.

Elsinore is a city in Denmark.

Shakespeare wrote his plays in both prose (conversational speaking) and poetry.

NAME: Prose lines will look like this.

NAME Poetry lines will look like this.

Sometimes Shakespeare would split a line of poetry between two or more characters. Francisco's line, "Not a mouse stirring," finishes Bernardo's previous line, "Have you had quiet guard?" so it is moved to the right to visually show the completion of the line.