

# Thinking about and revising *Hamlet*

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Tralee Education Support Centre, Thursday 9th November 2023

# The Plan

- **The *Hamlet* problem:** its cognitive demands.
  - Its scope.
  - Its questions
  - Its doublings and confusions
- **The rationale.**
- **Revising and thinking -**
  - Flashcards.
  - Quotation retrieval grids.
  - Sequence grids, including character guidance.
  - Swiss Army Knife (exploding) quotations.
  - Blacked out words.
  - Ordering quotations.
  - Brain dumps.
  - Soliloquies.
  - Audio recordings
  - Past questions.
  - Building to an essay.
- **Further reading: recommendations.**
  - On [juliangirdham.com](http://juliangirdham.com)
  - Online resources.
  - Good books.

# The *Hamlet* problem 1: its scope

- Lines: 4030.
  - (*Macbeth* 2477, *Othello* 3237, *King Lear* 3499. Tragedy average 2936).
- Lines spoken by Hamlet: 1506.
  - (*Iago* 1088, *Othello* 880, *King Lear* 749, *Macbeth* 715).
- Scenes:
  - *Macbeth* 28 (average 88 lines)
  - *Hamlet* 20 (average 201 lines).

# The *Hamlet* problem 2: its questions

- Why does Hamlet not take revenge quickly?
- Is revenge morally acceptable?
- Is there an ideal revenger? Hamlet / Laertes / Fortinbras / Pyrrhus?
- Why does he treat Ophelia so badly?
- How long ago did Old Hamlet die, followed by the marriage?
- Is the Claudius-Gertrude relationship 'incestuous'?
- Did they commit adultery before Old Hamlet's death?
- Is Polonius a harmless buffoon or an interfering manipulator?
- Is Fortinbras to be admired for attacking Poland?
- Does Ophelia kill herself?
- Why does Polonius receive an 'obscure funeral'?
- Why is Fortinbras appointed King at the end? Is he the right man?

# The *Hamlet* problem 3: doublings & confusions

- Confusion in the opening 2 lines.
- Why did (Young) Hamlet not become King rather than Claudius?
- Hamlet's first line - double-meaning (puns on 'kin' and 'son/sun').
- How does the first scene go from midnight to dawn in 10 minutes?
- Hamlet x 2; Fortinbras x 2.
- Hamlet as both tragic protagonist and clown figure.
- The Ghost as a person, and not one.
- To be / not to be.
- (Old) Hamlet and Claudius: Cain and Abel.
- (Young) Hamlet and Laertes.
- Other ghosts and voices: letters.
- Hamlet and Claudius's similarities ('to double business bound').
- Lucianus is nephew to the King, not brother.
- Hamlet as revenger (Claudius) and revengee (Laertes).
- How did the Queen know the details of Ophelia's end?
- Hamlet / Hamnet.

# The Hamlet problem 4:

*Polonius*

Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers  
Not of that dye which their investments show,  
But mere implorators of unholy suits,  
Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,  
The better to beguile.

# HAMLET

FOLD ON FOLD



GABRIEL JOSIPOVICI

# Josipovici: *Fold on Fold*

- ‘The play has so many mirrors, so many internal echoes, that it is difficult to get a grip on what is going on and in precisely what order.’
- ‘This is a play in which events tumble over themselves at dizzying speed and yet nothing much happens.’
- ‘It is a striking feature of this play that, for all its great speeches, some as many as thirty or forty lines long, the key moments are always breathtaking in their brevity and utter simplicity.’



Hamlet

***There is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so.***

Daniel Willingham

***Memory is the residue of thought.***

Mary Myatt

***High challenge, low threat.***

## **Peps Mccrea in 'Evidence Snacks'**

The more connections we forge, the deeper our understanding and the more durable our memory. The opposite of *meaningful learning* occurs when we learn things by rote and build isolated islands of knowledge.

## **David Ausubel**

In rote learning, we acquire isolated facts and rules that we can parrot back in an exam but that we cannot necessarily use.

# The rationale

- Elastic exercises. Time flexibility. Little and often.
- Mixture of independent and classtime work.
- Spaced. Every now and then after main study has finished.
- ‘Meaningful learning’.
- Does this help my students *think* about the play?
- Does this make their knowledge more secure and embedded?
- Hard thinking is effective.
- Classroom: probing questions.
- Rich discussions.
- Think comparatively.
- **Intellectual fitness.**

# www.learningscientists.org

## Six Strategies for Effective Learning Videos

### Strategy Videos for the Classroom

The videos below were designed to be used by teachers in the classroom to teach students about how to use the strategies. The below set of videos moves at a lecture pace.

#### Retrieval Practice

The screenshot shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top, the video title is "Retrieval Practice: A video for Students" with a "Copy link" button. The video content displays the text: "We come up with rules of thumb to help you study *well* and *without spending too much time*". Below the text is a diagram of a brain with a lightbulb inside, connected to a cloud with various colored arrows (red, blue, green, yellow) pointing to it. A "More videos" overlay is visible at the bottom, showing three thumbnails: "RETRIEVAL PRACTICE" with a brain icon, "Interleaving" with a person icon, and "Mind Mapping" with a hexagon icon. The video player controls at the bottom show a play button, volume icon, and a progress bar at 0:19 / 3:21. The YouTube logo and other icons are also present.

#### Interleaving

The screenshot shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top, the video title is "Interleaving: A Video for Students" with a "Copy link" button. The video content displays the title "Interleaving" in green. Below the title is a diagram illustrating interleaving. It shows three columns representing different study sessions. The first column is labeled "TOPICS A B C" and "STUDY SESSION 1". The second column is labeled "TOPICS C B A" and "STUDY SESSION 2". The third column is labeled "TOPICS A C B" and "STUDY SESSION 3". Each column features a stick figure icon sitting at a desk with books. Below the columns are three lightbulb icons labeled B, C, and A, representing the topics studied in each session. A large red play button is overlaid on the diagram. The video player controls at the bottom show a play button, volume icon, and a progress bar. The YouTube logo and other icons are also present.



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**LEARN TO STUDY USING Spaced Practice**  
Practice retrieval and spaced practice

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Start spaced practice for retrieval and write or draw answers to questions. Write the answer to a question on a card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- Review a list of cards every day. Review cards that you got wrong first. Review cards that you got right second.
- When you review a card that you got wrong, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- When you review a card that you got right, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- When you review a card that you got right, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**

Spaced practice is more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer. Spaced practice is more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer.

**REFERENCES**

Roediger III, H. L., & Karpicke, J. D. (2009). The benefits of massed practice. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 15(4), 210-218.

Click to download Spaced Practice poster

**LEARN TO STUDY USING Retrieval Practice**  
Practice retrieval and spaced practice

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Write or draw answers to questions. Write the answer to a question on a card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
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- When you review a card that you got right, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**

Retrieval practice is more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer. Retrieval practice is more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer.

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Click to download Retrieval Practice poster

**LEARN TO STUDY USING Elaboration**  
Practice retrieval and spaced practice

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Ask yourself questions with answers that are different from the original question. Write the answer to a question on a card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- Review a list of cards every day. Review cards that you got wrong first. Review cards that you got right second.
- When you review a card that you got wrong, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- When you review a card that you got right, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- When you review a card that you got right, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**

Elaboration is more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer. Elaboration is more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer.

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**LEARN TO STUDY USING Interleaving**  
Practice retrieval and spaced practice

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Study different topics in the same session. Write the answer to a question on a card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- Review a list of cards every day. Review cards that you got wrong first. Review cards that you got right second.
- When you review a card that you got wrong, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- When you review a card that you got right, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- When you review a card that you got right, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**

Interleaving is more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer. Interleaving is more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer.

**REFERENCES**

Roediger III, H. L., & Karpicke, J. D. (2009). The benefits of massed practice. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 15(4), 210-218.

Click to download the Interleaving poster

**LEARN TO STUDY USING Concrete Examples**  
Practice retrieval and spaced practice

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Write or draw concrete examples of the concept. Write the answer to a question on a card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- Review a list of cards every day. Review cards that you got wrong first. Review cards that you got right second.
- When you review a card that you got wrong, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- When you review a card that you got right, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- When you review a card that you got right, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**

Concrete examples are more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer. Concrete examples are more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer.

**REFERENCES**

Roediger III, H. L., & Karpicke, J. D. (2009). The benefits of massed practice. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 15(4), 210-218.

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**LEARN TO STUDY USING Dual Coding**  
Practice retrieval and spaced practice

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Write or draw answers to questions. Write the answer to a question on a card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- Review a list of cards every day. Review cards that you got wrong first. Review cards that you got right second.
- When you review a card that you got wrong, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- When you review a card that you got right, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.
- When you review a card that you got right, write the answer on the card. Then flip the card and try to recall the answer. Repeat for all questions.

**RESEARCH EVIDENCE**

Dual coding is more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer. Dual coding is more effective than massed practice. It helps you to learn more and to remember it for longer.

**REFERENCES**

Roediger III, H. L., & Karpicke, J. D. (2009). The benefits of massed practice. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 15(4), 210-218.

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# UNDERSTANDING HOW WE LEARN

A VISUAL GUIDE

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A David Fulton Book



# Hamlet

Set Page as Task

Edit Page

Immersive Reader



**15 key moment  
analyses**



**Minor character  
podcasts**



**Soliloquies**



**Revision  
podcasts**



**Quotation  
revision tests**



**Hamlet revision  
questions**



**Quizlet quotation  
retrieval  
practices**



**Mill Theatre  
programme**



**Hamlet quotation  
practice grids**

# Flashcards

- Paper/Index cards (Leitner system).
- Quizlet: class sets, and students' own ones.
- Others: Anki / IDoRecall / Kahoot! / Quizizz / Nearpod / Peardeck for Google Slides etc.
- Quotation (short, important, useful) with missing words.
- Reverse side: notes, connections, prompts for thinking.
  
- *Quizlet: 'This series is for revision/retrieval practice, and generating thoughts on key ideas and characters in the play. Fill in the missing word, and then think about the significance of the quotation, before looking at the reverse. Doing it with a partner can be useful too.'*

# Flashcards / test side

💡 Get a hint



21). 1.v. Hamlet: "The time is out of joint. O **???? ????,** / That I was ever born to set it right!"



# Flashcards / answer side

↕ Explain this



21) 1.v. Hamlet: "The time is out of joint. O **cursed spite** / That I was ever born to set it right!" His distaste at his fate, and how now he is no longer free, but 'bound' to his revenge.

# Quotation retrieval grids

- Pair-work, but still can be used independently.
- 15-20 minutes in class, followed by whole class discussion, sharing of ideas & probing questions.
  - key vocabulary.
  - context.
  - finish statements.
  - wider themes and characters.
  - opinions.
- Checking for understanding.
- Focus on key moments and ideas.

*Hamlet* quotation practice grid.

**3. 'Why then 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.' II ii.**

<p>1. What is happening at this point in the play?</p>	<p>2. Who is Hamlet replying to here, and what is the statement he is responding to?</p>	<p>3. What is the 'prison'? And why is it one?</p>
<p>4. What is the nature of the relationship between Hamlet and Rosencrantz &amp; Guildenstern at this point in the play?</p>	<p>5. (from 4). How does this relationship change later on?</p>	<p>6. Complete this quotation immediately after this moment: 'O God, I could be bounded ...??' What does this show?</p>
<p>7. Give an example of how 'thinking' makes something 'good or bad' for Hamlet.</p>	<p>8. In what ways is Hamlet 'imprisoned' in the play. Does he free himself?</p>	

# Sequence grids / 1

- What is the first thing that Hamlet does after swearing to follow the Ghost's call for revenge?
  - (75 lines later) He went to Ophelia's 'closet' with his 'doublet all unbraced' etc.
  - Classroom conversation: The speed of this reaction. Why does he do it? Is it genuine or acted? The start of the extraordinary Ophelia strain of the narrative.

# Sequence grids / 2

- Pair work ideally, but works with individuals.
- Testing of sequence knowledge. Secure? Alleviate cognitive load.
- Freeing up ability to think critically and connect.
- Embedding mental map of the play.
- Alun Wyn Jones
  - ‘From structure comes flow.’
- Focus on characters.






**Hamlet: sequence of events. Write in and highlight key events, and a small number of key quotations per scene.**

<p>1) I.i: Barnardo, Francisco/ Horatio on battlements.</p> <p>→</p>	<p>2) I.ii: Claudius with the court/ Soliloquy 1 / Hamlet and Horatio.</p>	<p>3) I.iii: Ophelia: advice from Laertes/ then Polonius.</p>	<p>4) I.iv: Hamlet sees Ghost, with Horatio etc</p> <p>→</p>	<p>5) I.v: follows on: Hamlet &amp; Ghost talk.</p>	<p>6) II.i: Polonius &amp; Reynaldo/ Ophelia 'affrighted'.</p> <p>←</p>
<p>7) II.ii: King with R&amp;G; <u>ambassadors</u> return/ Polonius to King on Hamlet's madness / Hamlet &amp; Polonius ('Fishmonger') / Hamlet with R&amp;G on the world / Players / the Pyrrhus story / Soliloquy 2.</p> <p>→</p>			<p>8) III.i: The King's conscience / Soliloquy 3 / H &amp; Ophelia - nunnery</p>	<p>9) III.ii: H and Players / The Play</p>	<p>10) III.iii. King &amp; Rosencrantz / Claudius soliloquy / Prayer scene</p> <p>←</p>
<p>11) III.iv: Hamlet and Gertrude – closet scene. Death of Polonius</p> <p>→</p>	<p>12) IV.i: King &amp; Queen; R&amp;G. Aftermath of III.iv</p>	<p>13) IV.ii: Hamlet with R&amp;G – 'sponge'.</p> <p>→</p>	<p>14) IV.iii: King &amp; Hamlet; the body.</p>	<p>15) IV.iv: Fortinbras &amp; Army; Soliloquy 4.</p>	<p>16) IV.v: Queen, &amp; Ophelia in distress / Laertes bursts in.</p> <p>←</p>
<p>17) IV.vi: Horatio reads letter from H.</p> <p>→</p>	<p>18) IV.vii: King &amp; Laertes / Ophelia's death.</p>		<p>19) V.i: Graveyard / Ophelia's funeral</p> <p>→</p>	<p>20) V.ii: Hamlet &amp; Horatio / <u>Osrice</u> /duel etc and the end.</p>	

**Hamlet: sequence of events. What happens in the yellow scenes? Brief quotations to identify these?**

<p>1) I.i: Barnardo, Francisco/ Horatio on battlements.</p> <p>→</p>	<p>2) I.ii: Claudius with the court/ Soliloquy 1 / Hamlet and Horatio.</p>	<p>3) I.iii: Ophelia: advice from Laertes/ then Polonius.</p>	<p>4) I.iv: Hamlet sees Ghost, with Horatio etc</p> <p>→</p>	<p>5) I.v:</p>	<p>6) II.i: Polonius &amp; Reynaldo/ Ophelia 'affrighted'.</p> <p>←</p>
<p>7) II.ii: King with R&amp;G; <u>ambassadors return</u>/ Polonius to King on Hamlet's madness / Hamlet &amp; Polonius ('Fishmonger') / Hamlet with R&amp;G on the world / Players / the Pyrrhus story / Soliloquy 2.</p> <p>→</p>			<p>8) III.i:</p>	<p>9) III.ii: H and Players / The Play</p>	<p>10) III.iii. King &amp; Rosencrantz / Claudius soliloquy / Prayer scene</p> <p>←</p>
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**Hamlet: sequence of events. What are the key events in each scene? Identify them by the quotations.  = major soliloquy**

<p>'This bodes some strange eruption to our state'</p> <p>→</p>	<p>'Heaven and earth, / Must I remember?'</p> <p></p>	<p>'From this time / Be somewhat scanner of your maiden presence.'</p>	<p>'Why, what should be the fear? / I do not set my life at a pin's fee.'</p> <p>→</p>	<p>'Haste me to know't, that I with wings as swift / As meditation or the thoughts of love, / May sweep to my revenge.'</p>		<p>'I did repel his letters, and denied / His access to me.'</p> <p>↙</p>
<p>1) 'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star:/ This must not be.'                  2) 'O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.'                  3) 'The hellish Pyrrhus / Old grandsire Priam seeks.'                  4)  'Am I coward? Who calls me villain?'</p> <p>→</p>				<p>'How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!'</p> <p></p>	<p>'The purpose of playing, whose end... is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature.'</p>	<p>'O my offence is rank, it smells to heaven.'</p> <p></p> <p>↙</p>
<p>'O shame, where is thy blush?'</p> <p>'O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.'</p> <p>→</p>		<p>"A weeps for what is done."</p>	<p>'The King is a thing... of nothing.'</p> <p>→</p>	<p>'Do it England, for like the hecic in my blood he rages.'</p>	<p>'Examples gross as earth exhort me.'</p> <p></p>	<p>'O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs/ All from her father's death.'</p> <p>↙</p>
<p>[Horatio reads out Hamlet's letter about the pirates]</p> <p>→</p>	<p>1) 'No place indeed should murder sanctuaries.' 2) 'As one incapable of her own distress.'</p>	<p>'What is he whose grief/ Bears such an emphasis?'</p> <p>→</p>	<p>1) 'The readiness is all.' 2) 'He is justly served./ It is a poison tempered by himself.'</p>			



**GERTRUDE: Hamlet: sequence of events.**

<p>1) I.i: Barnardo, Francisco/ Horatio on battlements.</p> <p>→</p>	<p>2) I.ii: Claudius with the court/ Soliloquy 1 / Hamlet and Horatio.</p>	<p>3) I.iii: Ophelia: advice from Laertes/ then Polonius.</p>	<p>4) I.iv: Hamlet sees Ghost, with Horatio etc</p> <p>→</p>	<p>5) I.v: follows on: Hamlet &amp; Ghost talk.</p>	<p>6) II.i: Polonius &amp; Reynaldo/ Ophelia 'affrighted'.</p> <p>←</p>	
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### CLAUDIUS - Hamlet: sequence of events.

<p>1) I.i: Barnardo, Francisco/ Horatio on battlements.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">→</p>	<p>2) I.ii: Claudius with the court/ Soliloquy 1 / Hamlet and Horatio.</p>	<p>3) I.iii: Ophelia: advice from Laertes/ then Polonius.</p>	<p>4) I.iv: Hamlet sees Ghost, with Horatio etc</p> <p style="text-align: right;">→</p>	<p>5) I.v: follows on: Hamlet &amp; Ghost talk.</p>	<p>6) II.i: Polonius &amp; Reynaldo/ Ophelia 'affrighted'.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">←</p>
<p>7) II.ii: King with R&amp;G; <u>ambassadors</u> return/ Polonius to King on Hamlet's madness / Hamlet &amp; Polonius ('Fishmonger') / Hamlet with R&amp;G on the world / Players / the Pyrrhus story / Soliloquy 2.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">→</p>			<p>8) III.i: The King's conscience / Soliloquy 3 / H &amp; Ophelia - nunnery</p>	<p>9) III.ii: H and Players / The Play</p>	<p>10) III.iii. King &amp; Rosencrantz / Claudius soliloquy / Prayer scene</p> <p style="text-align: right;">←</p>
<p>11) III.iv: Hamlet and Gertrude – closet scene. Death of Polonius</p> <p style="text-align: right;">→</p>	<p>12) IV.i: King &amp; Queen; R&amp;G. Aftermath of III.iv</p>	<p>13) IV.ii: Hamlet with R&amp;G – 'sponge'.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">→</p>	<p>14) IV.iii: King &amp; Hamlet; the body.</p>	<p>15) IV.iv: Fortinbras &amp; Army; Soliloquy 4.</p>	<p>16) IV.v: Queen, &amp; Ophelia in distress / Laertes bursts in.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">←</p>
<p>17) IV.vi: Horatio reads letter from H.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">→</p>	<p>18) IV.vii: King &amp; Laertes / Ophelia's death.</p>		<p>19) V.i: Graveyard / Ophelia's funeral</p> <p style="text-align: right;">→</p>	<p>20) V.ii: Hamlet &amp; Horatio / Osric/duel etc and the end.</p>	

**OPHELIA - Hamlet: sequence of events**

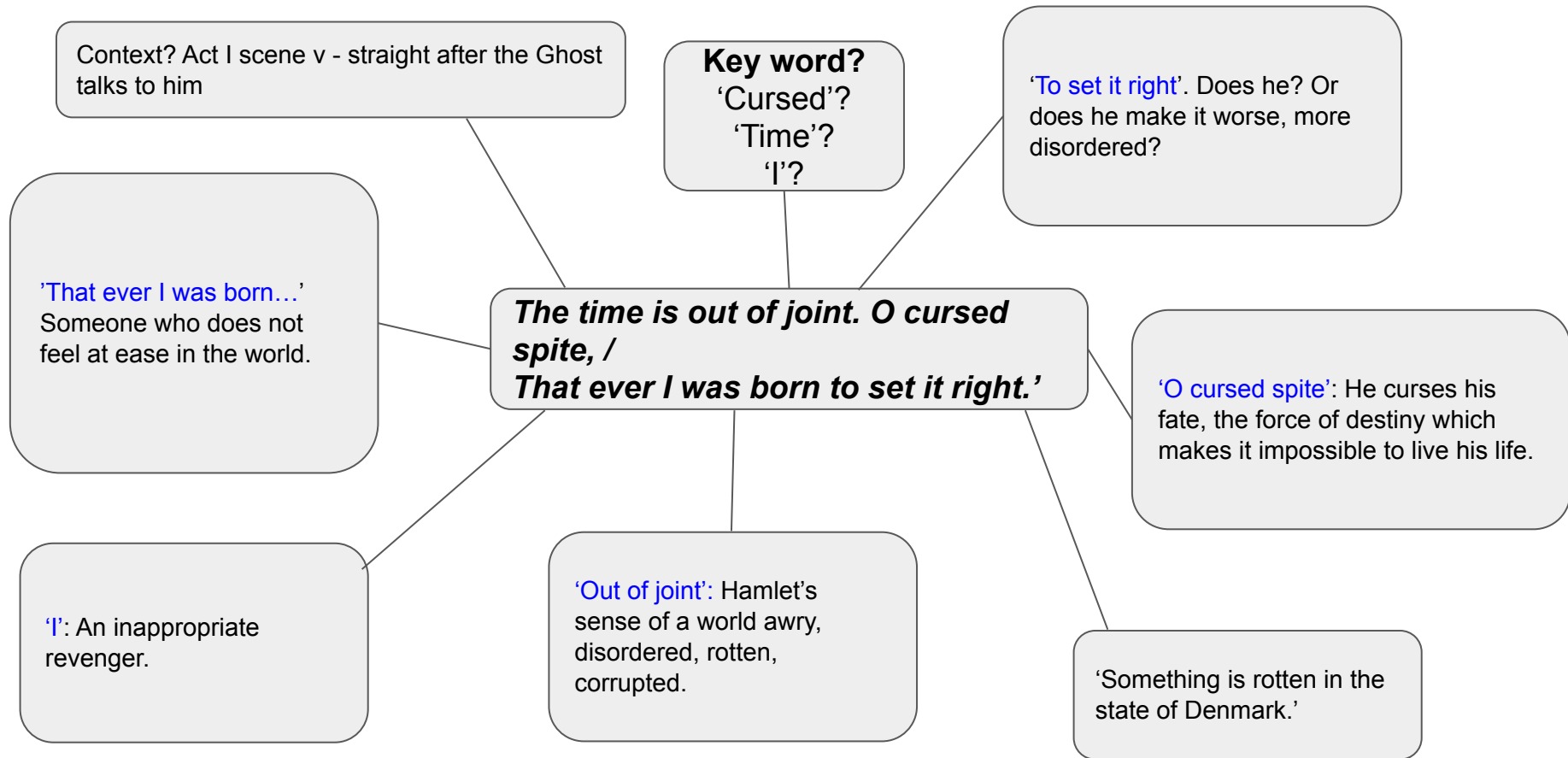
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# Swiss Army Knife (exploding) quotations

*The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set it right.*

## Probing questions:

- If you had to highlight one word only, what, and why?
- *Why* does the character say this?
- How is he/she similar or different to other characters?
- How does this echo anything that has already been said/happened?
- Can you connect anything later in the play to this?



# Blacked out words

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;  
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,  
A brother's murder!—Pray can I not,  
Though inclination be as sharp as will;  
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;  
And, like a man to double business bound,  
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,  
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand  
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,  
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy  
But to confront the visage of offence?

# Blacked out words

O, my offence is [REDACTED], it smells to heaven;  
It hath the primal eldest [REDACTED] upon't,  
A brother's murder!—Pray can I not,  
Though [REDACTED] be as sharp as will;  
My stronger [REDACTED] defeats my strong intent;  
And, like a man to [REDACTED] business bound,  
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,  
And both neglect. What if this [REDACTED] hand  
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,  
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
To wash it [REDACTED]? Whereto serves [REDACTED]  
But to confront the visage of offence?

# Blacked out words

O, my offence is **rank**, it smells to heaven;  
It hath the primal eldest **curse** upon't,  
A brother's murder!—Pray can I not,  
Though **inclination** be as sharp as will;  
My stronger **guilt** defeats my strong intent;  
And, like a man to **double** business bound,  
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,  
And both neglect. What if this **cursed** hand  
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,  
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
To wash it **white as snow**? Whereto serves **mercy**  
But to confront the visage of offence?



## **Understanding Gertrude's character:- put these quotations in context, then order of importance**

1. 'Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die, / Passing through nature to eternity.'
2. 'I doubt it is no other but the main, / His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage.'
3. 'What have I done that thou dar'st wag thy tongue / In noise so rude against me?'
4. 'Be thou assured, if words be made of breath, / and breath of life, I have no life to breathe / What thou hast said to me.'

Five quotations from the play 'Hamlet' which are by or about Laertes which can be used for a class discussion about the nature of his character in which students put them in order of importance



Certainly! Here are five quotations by or about Laertes from "Hamlet," which can be used for a class discussion about the nature of his character. Afterward, students can discuss and collectively determine the order of importance based on their interpretations:

1. **Laertes' Advice to Ophelia:** In Act 1, Scene 3, Laertes gives his sister Ophelia advice about her relationship with Hamlet, saying, "Be wary then; best safety lies in fear."
2. **Laertes' Vengeful Nature:** In Act 4, Scene 7, Laertes reveals his willingness to seek revenge when he says, "To hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil! Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!"
3. **Claudius Describing Laertes:** In Act 4, Scene 7, Claudius speaks about Laertes, saying, "And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe, But even his mother shall uncharge the practice And call it accident."
4. **Laertes' Grief for Ophelia:** In Act 4, Scene 7, Laertes expresses his grief for Ophelia, "Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia, And therefore I forbid my tears."
5. **Laertes' Regret and Forgiveness:** In Act 5, Scene 2, Laertes shows remorse and seeks forgiveness when he says to Hamlet, "I am justly killed with mine own treachery," and later, "Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet."

After discussing these quotations, students can consider which aspects of Laertes' character they believe are most important. This may vary depending on individual interpretations and perspectives, which can lead to a rich discussion about the complexity of characters in literature.

Chat GPT error!

# Brain Dumps (Free Recall)

- Pooja K. Agarwal (Retrieval Practice): *A small strategy that makes a big impact on student learning – based on decades of cognitive science research .... Free recall facilitates learning of past content, future content, and even students' organization of knowledge for a variety of subject areas, basic knowledge, and complex learning.*
- Sheet of A3 paper.
- Choose a scene / theme / character.
  - e.g. Meeting the Ghost / revenge / Ophelia
- 10 minutes.
- Write down *everything* you know (ideas, connections, quotations).
- Then a general share / send back to the book, notes to add more (different colour?). Or swop with a partner and add 3 new things.

# Soliloquies

4. Jonathan Slinger (2013) at the Royal Shakespeare Company.



1. Kenneth Branagh in a solid film production from 1996:



3. Mel Gibson, film, 1990



2. Rory Kinnear in a National Theatre production we saw in Dundrum live in 2013:



# Audio recordings

- Carry around on the phone.
  - Branagh production in links.
- Little and often.
- Focus on the words.
- Performance freshens lines.
- Pause for testing?

# Past questions: Caveats

## D HAMLET – William Shakespeare

- (i) “Uncertainty, which features constantly in Shakespeare’s play, *Hamlet*, adds significantly to the dramatic impact of the play.”

Discuss the above statement, developing your response with reference to the text.

OR

- (ii) Discuss how Shakespeare makes effective use, for a variety of purposes, of the contradictions and inconsistencies evident in Hamlet’s character. Develop your discussion with reference to Shakespeare’s play, *Hamlet*.

## E HAMLET – William Shakespeare

- (i) “Hamlet’s madness, whether genuine or not, adds to the fascination of his character for the audience.”

Discuss this statement, supporting your answer with suitable reference to the play, *Hamlet*.

OR

- (ii) “Shakespeare uses a variety of techniques to convey a world of corruption in the play, *Hamlet*.”

Write your response to this statement, supporting your answer with suitable reference to the text.

## E HAMLET – William Shakespeare

- (i) Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet* has been described as “a disturbing psychological thriller.”

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this description of the play?  
In your response you should deal with all aspects of the statement, supporting your answer with reference to the text.

OR

- (ii) Shakespeare makes effective use of both Laertes and Horatio to fulfil a variety of dramatic functions in his play, *Hamlet*.”

Discuss this statement, supporting your answer with reference to the text.

## D HAMLET – William Shakespeare

- (i) “Revenge and justice are finely balanced themes in the play, *Hamlet*.”

Discuss this statement, supporting your answer with suitable reference to the text.

OR

- (ii) “Claudius can be seen as both a heartless villain and a character with some redeeming qualities in the play, *Hamlet*.”

Discuss both aspects of this statement, supporting your answer with suitable reference to the text.

# Practice questions / 1

- Higher Level: (2020) Uncertainty / Inconsistencies in Hamlet's character; (2017) Disturbing psychological thriller / Laertes and Horatio; (2012) Hamlet's madness / world of corruption; (2011) revenge and justice / Claudius
- SAMPLE: 'Gertrude and Ophelia, the only two women in the play *Hamlet*, differ in their impact on the central story, but are similar in the ways they are victims of culture dominated by men.'
- SAMPLE: 'Compare and contrast the roles and fates of Ophelia and Gertrude in the play *Hamlet*. How do their relationships with the character Hamlet and their actions contribute to the overall themes of the play?'

# Practice questions / 2

- *Gertrude and Ophelia, the only two women in the play Hamlet, differ in their impact on the central story, but are similar in the ways they are victims of culture dominated by men.*
- Denmark as seen in the play *Hamlet* is an overwhelmingly male culture. This starts at the top, in all the men who are in positions of power, and who dominate the course of the story, in which we see just two women. Gertrude is defined by being the former wife of a King, the current wife of another, and the mother of the Prince: in the end, she asserts herself in defence of her son. Ophelia is controlled by her father and brother, and treated appallingly by a man who she trusts completely: in the end, she loses her mind. By the end of the play both women have died, victims of a culture which treats them as incidental and unimportant.



## Guidelines for Leaving Certificate literature essay (Higher Level)

**Introduction :** 6-10 line 'mini-essay' that encapsulates the argument you are about to present.  
Leave out detail and quotations.

checklist	tick
<i>I have written out the title/question, and highlighted the key words/phrases.</i>	
<i>I have addressed each of these words/phrases in my introductory paragraph.</i>	
<i>The marker knows exactly what I am going to argue during my essay.</i>	

**Body of essay:**

Checklist	tick
<i>Each paragraph addresses a single topic</i>	
<i>The first sentence of each paragraph leads on from the last sentence of the previous one</i>	
<i>Each quotation/reference I have used backs up a point I have made</i>	
<i>I have not used any facts/plot which do not back up a point</i>	
<i>(narrative) I have not retold the story at any point / (poetry) I have not paraphrased the lines at any point</i>	
<i>There is some level of personal engagement with the text</i>	

**Here are some basic questions the marker will ask when looking at your essay:**

- Have you consistently answered the question? Are there some parts which are not directed precisely at the question? (P, C).
- Does your opening paragraph address the key terms of the question as a clear overview? (P)
- Is your essay coherently structured, with each paragraph leading logically on from the previous one, and a strong conclusion? (C).
- What is the quality of your depth of thought about the text(s)? (P)
- How well do you know the text(s), and how effectively and precisely do you use evidence to back up your points? (P, C)
- What is the quality of your English sentence by sentence – vocabulary, syntax, grammar, spelling? (L, M)

Sentences selected from the main body of the essay (excluding introduction and conclusion) that form the core argument you have made. Highlight them first, then re-write them below (you don't have to use 12).

+	
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# The Plan

- The *Hamlet* problem: its cognitive load
  - Its scope.
  - Its questions
  - Its doublings and confusions, and Fold on Fold
- The rationale.
- Revising and thinking -
  - Flashcards.
  - Quotation retrieval grids.
  - Sequence grids, including character guidance.
  - Swiss Army Knife (exploding) quotations.
  - Blacked out words.
  - Ordering quotations.
  - Brain dumps.
  - Soliloquies.
  - Audio recordings
  - Past questions.
  - Building to an essay.
- Further reading: recommendations.
  - On [juliangirdham.com](http://juliangirdham.com)
  - Online resources.
  - Good books.

# Resources at [juliangirdham.com](http://juliangirdham.com)

- 6 Quizlets for retrieval practice and discussion.
- Revision podcasts on the first scene and the first soliloquy, & essays.
- 15 quotation thinking grids.
- 5-minute talks on 10 'lesser' characters in the play: Fortinbras, Horatio, Laertes, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Polonius, Ophelia, The First Player, Osric, The First Gravedigger.
- 15 key short moments annotated via audio and video.

Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pill  
I dare damnation. To this point I stand,  
That both the worlds I give to negligence,  
Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged  
Most thoroughly for my father.

KING CLAUDIUS  
Who shall stay you?  
LAERTES  
My will, not all the world:  
And for my means, I'll husband them so well,  
They shall go far with little.

KING CLAUDIUS  
Good Laertes,  
If you desire to know the certainty  
Of your dear father's death, is't writ in your revenge,  
That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe,

03:29

**Hamlet 11: Act 4 scene 5 - I dar...**  
9 months ago

👍 📄 ⇌ 🔗 ⋮

Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?  
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,  
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?  
You cannot call it love; for at your age  
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,  
And waits upon the judgement: and what judgement!  
Would step from this to this? Sense, sure, you have,  
Else could you not have motion; but sense, that sense  
Is appoplex'd; for madness would not err,  
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd  
But it reserved some quantity of choice,  
To serve in such a difference. What devil was't

70

03:33

**Hamlet 10: Act 3 scene 4 - have ...**  
9 months ago

👍 📄 ⇌ 🔗 ⋮

With all the strength and arm of the mine  
To keep itself from noyance; but much more  
That spirit upon whose weal depends and rests  
The lives of many. The cesse of majesty  
Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw  
What's near it with it. It is a massy wheel,  
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,  
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
Are mortis'd and adjoin'd; which when it falls,  
Each small annexment, petty consequence,  
Attends the boist'rous ruin. Never a part  
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

03:21

**Hamlet 9: Act 3 scene iii - the ce...**  
9 months ago

👍 📄 ⇌ 🔗 ⋮

That no revenue hast but thy good spirits  
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flatter'd?  
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,  
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee  
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?  
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice  
And could of men distinguish, her election  
Hath seal'd thee for herself. For thou hast been  
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing;  
A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards  
Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those  
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled  
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger  
To sound what stop she please. Give me the  
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,

04:46

**Hamlet 8: Act 3 scene ii - passio...**  
9 months ago

👍 📄 ⇌ 🔗 ⋮

I ne courtiers, souldiers, scholars, eye, tongue, sword;  
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,  
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!  
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,  
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,  
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,  
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;  
That unmatched'd form and feature of blown youth  
Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me,  
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

02:58

**Hamlet 7: Act 3 scene i - 'like s...**  
9 months ago

👍 📄 ⇌ 🔗 ⋮

Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this,—  
'Tis too much proved—that with devotion's visage  
And pious action we do sugar o'er  
The devil himself.

KING CLAUDIUS  
[Aside] O, 'tis too true!  
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!  
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,  
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it  
Than is my deed to my most painted self!  
O heavy burthen!

RD POLONIUS  
I hear him coming: let's withdraw, my lord.

02:55

**Hamlet 6: Act 3 scene i - O heav...**  
9 months ago

👍 📄 ⇌ 🔗 ⋮

The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,  
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble  
When he lay couch'd in the ominous horse,  
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd  
With heraldry more dismal; head to foot  
Now is he total gules; horribly trick'd  
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,  
Baked and impasted with the parching streets,  
That lend a tyrannous and damned light  
To their lord's murder: roasted in wrath and fire,  
And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,  
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus  
Old grandsire Priam speaks.

03:18

**Hamlet 5: Act 2 scene ii - The ru...**  
9 months ago

👍 📄 ⇌ 🔗 ⋮

Then is the world one.

ROSENCRANTZ  
A goodly one; in which there are many confines,  
wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

ROSENCRANTZ  
We think not so, my lord.

HAMLET  
Why, then, 'tis none to you; for there is nothing  
either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me  
it is a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ  
Why then, your ambition makes it one; 'tis too  
narrow for your mind.

HAMLET  
O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count  
myself a king of infinite space, were it  
not that I have bad dreams.

GUILDENSTERN  
Which dreams indeed are ambition, for the very

03:25

**Hamlet 4: Act 2 scene ii - 'Denm...**  
9 months ago

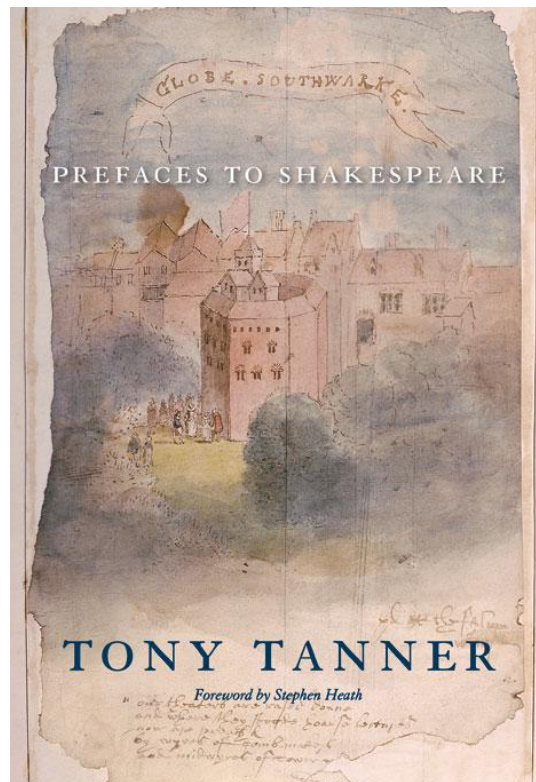
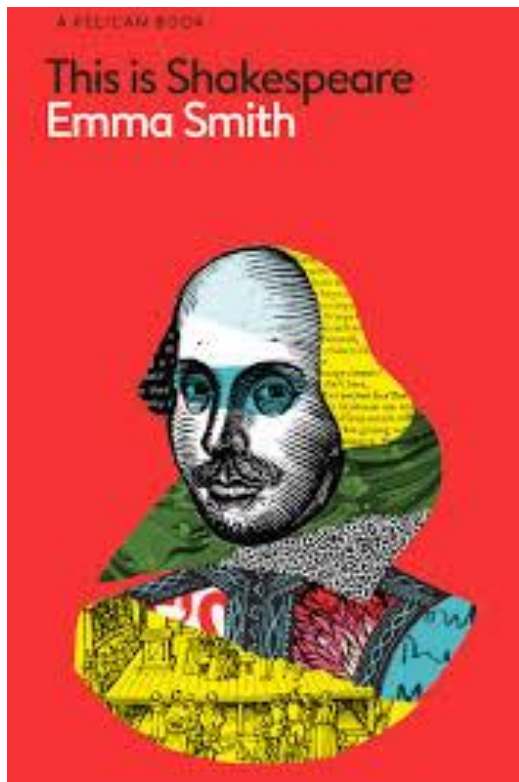
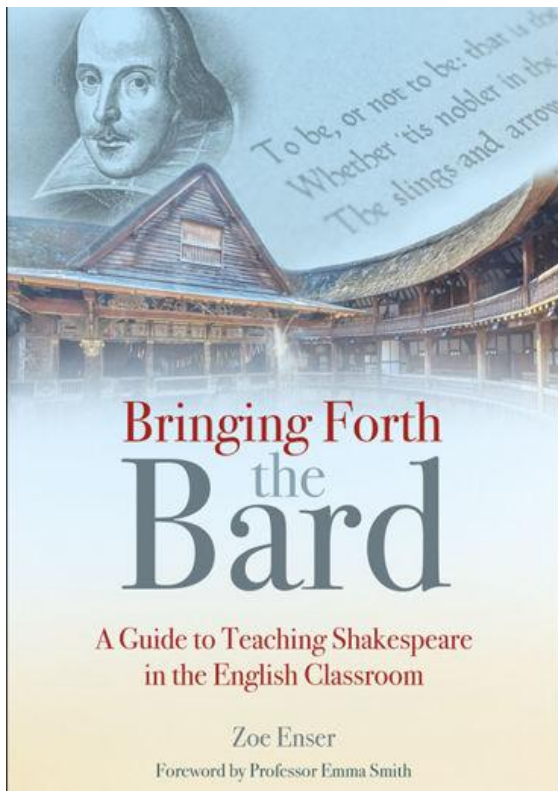
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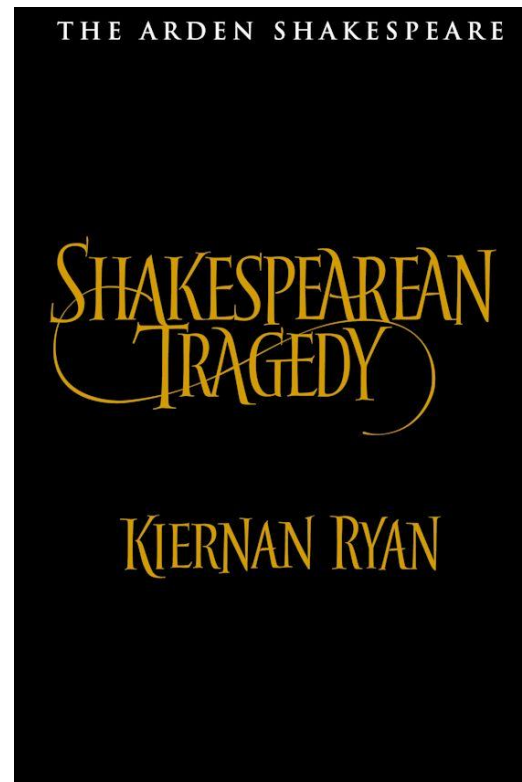
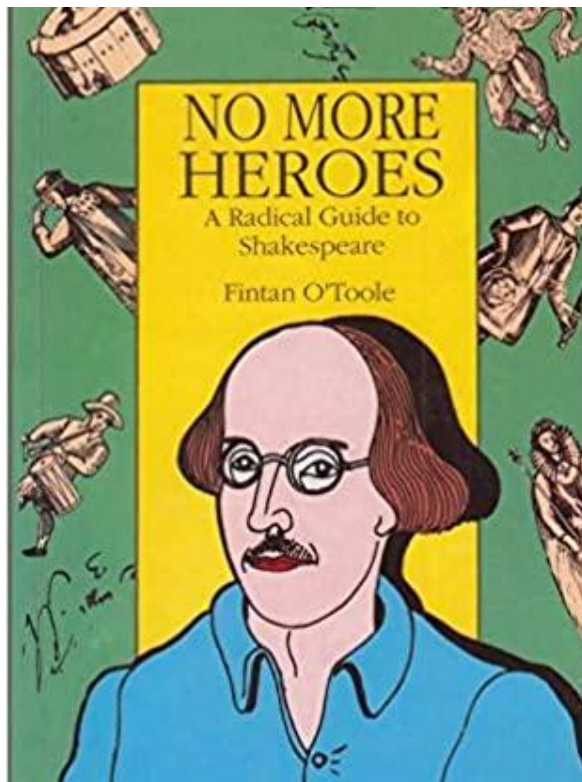
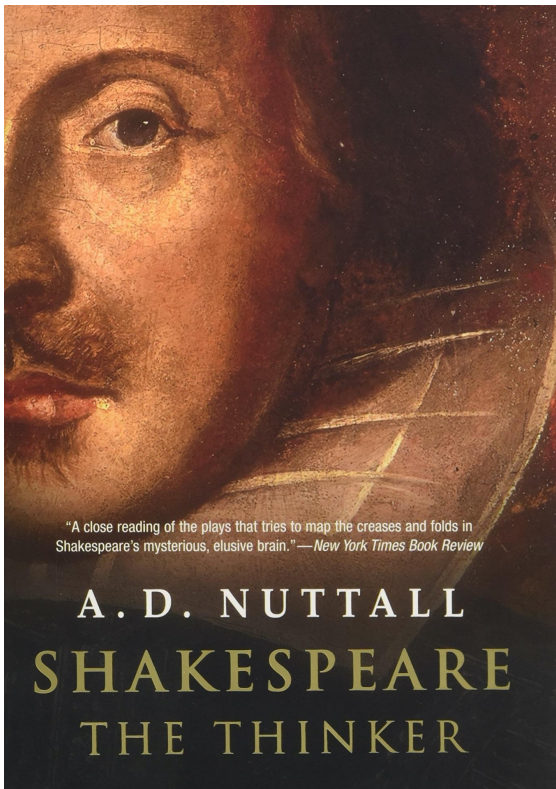
# Hamlet

- [Quizlets for quotation retrieval practice](#) (designed for Leaving Certificate revision). One per Act, plus one with them all for the whole play. Important: discuss the ideas/context etc for each quotation, rather than 'just' recall it.
- [15 key moments annotated](#) (video and audio).
- **Thinking about quotations:** 15 exercises you can do on your own, or, even better, in a pair. These are for when you know the play very well.
- SCC English revision podcasts are [here](#), on 'The first soliloquy', 'The first scene', and two ones which gather the 10 Characters series (below). And two essays based on podcasts: 1) [on the opening scene](#). 2) [on the first soliloquy](#).
- **10 Characters in Hamlet:** 5-minute podcasts on 'lesser' characters: [Fortinbras](#), [Horatio](#), [Laertes](#), [Rosencrantz and Guildenstern](#), [Polonius](#), [Ophelia](#), [The First Player](#), [Osric](#), [The First Gravedigger](#).
- [My notes](#) on Gabriel Josipovici's fascinating book *Hamlet Fold by Fold*.
- [My notes](#) on the *Hamlet* chapter in Emma Smith's book *This is Shakespeare*.
- [Conor Hanratty's Hamlet Podcast](#) is a must-listen: every single scene discussed.
- **The whole text of the play:** put it on your own computer.
- **An episode** of Melvyn Bragg's *In Our Time* about the play.
- The whole text of *Hamlet* as a [Wordle](#) (click on the image for a bigger view).
- **A recording** of the 1993 BBC radio version with Kenneth Branagh.
- An excellent resource: the [BBC Archive Hamlet](#).
- Radio documentary by 'This American Life' called '[Act V](#)' on a prison production of the play.
- [The Ten Best Hamlets](#).

[www.juliangirdham.com/shakespeare-1](http://www.juliangirdham.com/shakespeare-1)







# An Introduction to Cognitive Science for English teachers

Julian Girdham

@sccenglish

[www.juliangirdham.com](http://www.juliangirdham.com)

Tralee Education Support Centre,  
Monday 15th January 2024, 7-8pm.





**Thank you!**

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