



Herb and Lois Walker's

SCRIPTS FOR SCHOOLS

HAMLET, For Short

A "Shortened Shakespeare"
Version of HAMLET
By Lee Karvonen

Teacher Version

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ESTABLISHING THE RHYTHM

To find the proper rhythm for this piece, first read-aloud and clap through the sections as you go. Each underlined word or word part falls directly on a beat. As you read, clap on each underlined word, keeping the rhythm steady. Be careful not to read too fast!

This is a rehearsal technique and readers will not clap throughout these sections during performance. After you have established the beat, it is time to start interpreting, experimenting, and having fun with the words by varying tempo, volume, inflection, and expression. Be careful not to allow the development of a "sing-song" delivery while rehearsing and performing this script.

STAGING

This script may be staged as either a Readers Theater Reading or as a Traditional Play: **If you are staging it as RT**, hang signs around each characters neck telling the audience the name of that character. (**HAMLET, HORATO, GERTRUDE**, etc.). Since most RT productions do not involve much stage movement, ask your NARRATOR to hold up large signs at the proper moments to inform the audience which stage movements are happening at the time. (**ASIDE, HAMLET STABS THE CURTAIN, POLONIUS DIES, LAERTES JUMPS AT HAMLET, THE TWO WRESTLE AND FALL INTO THE GRAVE, HAMLET STABS CLAUDIUS, HAMLET FORCES THE REMAINING POISONED WINE DOWN CLAUDIUS' THROAT, HAMLET DIES**, etc.)

If you are staging the piece as Traditional Theater, simply block your actors as you normally would, following the stage directions below.

SCENE ONE

NARRATOR: THE OUTLOOK WASN'T BRILLIANT FOR THE DANISH COURT THAT DAY.
THE KING WAS IN HIS GRAVE, AND HIS SON WAS NOT OKAY.
SO ON THAT STRICKEN SON AND HEIR, A MELANCHOLY SAT
FOR THERE SEEMED, REGARDING MOTHER, THAT THE CHANCES WERE
QUITE FAT.

CLAUDIUS: O HAMLET, MY DEAR NEPHEW, WHY DO YOU LOOK SO DARK?
I KNOW THAT LOSING DADDY CANNOT BE A WALK IN THE PARK.
BUT LIFE, YOU KNOW, MUST GO ON. JUST LOOK AT MOTHER DEAR.
SHE'S MY WIFE AND QUEEN NOW.

HAMLET: (Aside) AND ISN'T THAT QUITE QUEER!

MY FATHER'S BARELY IN HIS GRAVE AND MOTHER HAS REWED!
TO UNCLE! IT SEEMS THAT IS INCEST IN MY PARENTS' BED!
BUT I'M NO FOOL, ALTHOUGH I WILL PLAY ONE FOR A WHILE
BECAUSE I CANNOT BEAR TO SEE MY SLEAZY UNCLE SMILE.
ALL THE COURT WILL THINK I'M MAD, BUT REALLY I WILL CHECK
TO LEARN IF UNCLE HAS PLAYED FAIR, OR IF HE'S STACKED THE DECK.

SCENE TWO

HORATIO: O HAMLET, DEAREST FRIEND OF MINE, I HAVE A TALE TO TELL.
THESE GUARDS HAVE SEEN YOUR FATHER OR A GHOST COME BACK
FROM HELL.

HAMLET: O WHEN AND WHERE? YOU HAVE TO TELL. I REALLY HAVE TO KNOW
IF FATHER HAS A WORD FOR ME. LET'S FIND HIM NOW. LET'S GO!

SCENE THREE

HAMLET: IT'S COLD AND DARK AND DAMP AND MISTY, BUT THERE IS NO GHOST.

HORATIO: MY LORD, HAVE PATIENCE, IF YOU PLEASE. AND BE A GRACIOUS HOST.

GHOST: OH DANES, COME HITHER. HEAR MY TALE, HOW I DID DISAPPEAR
AS I SLEPT IN MY ORCHARD, MY BRO POURED POISON IN MY EAR.
SWEAR TO ME UPON YOUR LIFE MY DEATH YOU WILL AVENGE.
I CANNOT SLEEP UNTIL I KNOW MY SON GETS MY REVENGE!

HAMLET: O FATHER, HOW CAN I BUT PROMISE I WILL MAKE HIM PAY
AND THAT EVIL UNCLE CLAUDIUS, I WILL GLADLY SLAY?

HORATIO: HE SMILED AND THEN HE LEFT, MY LORD, THE REST IS UP TO YOU.

HAMLET: AND TO AVENGE MY FATHER'S MURDER, THAT I WILL GLADLY DO.

SCENE FOUR

GERTRUDE: MY SON, YOU ACT SO STRANGELY. ARE YOU FEELING BLUE?

HAMLET: MOTHER, I AM OH SO WELL. WOULD THAT YOU WERE TOO.

GERTRUDE: ARE YOU UPSET I'VE WED YOUR UNCLE? HE HAS REALLY BEEN SO
KIND.

HAMLET: OF COURSE HE HAS, DEAR MOTHER. DO YOU THINK I'M BLIND?
HE IS A THRIFTY SORT, I SEE. TO FUEL THE WEDDING FEAST
HE HAS USED THE FUNERAL LEFTOVERS. THRIFTY, TO SAY THE
LEAST.

SCENE FIVE

OPHELIA: HAMLET, DO YOU LOVE ME? WILL WE MARRY? WILL WE WED?

HAMLET: FICKLENESS, THY NAME IS WOMAN. RATHER, I'D BE DEAD!

OPHELIA: HAMLET, PLEASE DON'T TORTURE ME! PLEASE BE SWEET AND KIND.

HAMLET: JUST FORGET ME, SWEETHEART, YOU'VE HELPED ME LOSE MY MIND.

SCENE SIX

LAERTES: FATHER, SINCE I GO AWAY, HAVE YOU ANY GOOD ADVICE?
I'LL ONLY ASK YOU ONCE BECAUSE I KNOW YOU'LL ANSWER TWICE.

POLONIUS: MY SON, IN FRANCE YOU MUST BE GOOD AND HEED ME WHEN
I SAY

DON'T LEND AND DON'T YOU BORROW; LENDERS RARELY DO REPAY.

SO HAVE YOURSELF A GOOD TRIP AND MIND YOUR Ps AND Qs
AND THEN COME BACK TO ALL OF US WHEN YOU HAVE PAID
YOUR DUES.

LAERTES: OPHELIA, I MUST TELL YOU. DO NOT WAIT FOR HAMLET'S LOVE.
PRINCES ARE NOTORIOUS AND GET ORDERS FROM ABOVE.
DON'T WASTE YOUR LOVE ON PRINCES. THEY CANNOT BE TRUE.

OPHELIA: OH, LAERTES, I STILL LOVE HIM AND HE MAKES ME FEEL SO BLUE.

SCENE SEVEN

CLAUDIUS: ROSENCRATZ AND GUILDENSTERN, HAMLET'S CHILDHOOD FRIENDS
HANG AROUND WITH HAMLET TO SEE WHY HE'S GONE AROUND THE
BEND.

MAKE SURE HE'LL NOT SUSPECT A THING, WHILE UPON HIM YOU DO
SPY,

AND THEN REPORT ALL BACK TO ME, THE UNDERSTANDING GUY.

SCENE EIGHT

HAMLET: (Aside) I THINK I'M SURE MY DAD IS RIGHT AND CLAUDIUS KILLED HIM DEAD,

BUT MAYBE I JUST DREAMED IT ALL, IN MY LITTLE BED.
TO BE OR NOT TO BE IS EASY; KILLING WILL BE HARD.
I JUST WANT TO BE VERY SURE; I MUST KEEP UP MY GUARD.
IF I COULD JUST BE POSITIVE THAT CLAUDIUS IS THE PERP,
THEN I COULD EASILY OFF HIM, THE SLIMY LITTLE TWERP.
BUT IF I'M WRONG AND HE'S A CREEP, BUT NOT A MURDERER,
THEN I WOULD FEEL JUST TERRIBLE, AND I WOULD HATE TO ERR.

SCENE NINE

HAMLET: (Aside) SOME ACTING TROUPE HAS COME TO TOWN. PERHAPS
THEY'LL IMPROVISE

A LITTLE MURDER PLOT, TO SEE CLAUDIUS' SURPRISE

WHEN A MURDER LIKE HIS VERY OWN, HE SEES BEFORE HIS FACE.
HE SHOULD REACT AND I CAN SURELY PUT HIM IN HIS PLACE.

SCENE TEN

HAMLET: (Aside) THE PLOT'S AFOOT, THE TROUPE IS MINE, THE MURDER WILL
OCCUR

AND I WILL SEE HIS GUILTY FACE, AND THEN WILL FLY THE FUR!
AHA, HERE COMES THE DIRTY BIT! CLAUDIUS IS AMAZED!
HE WILL BE MUCH MORE UPSET WHEN HE SEES ME CRAZED!
AND NOW I KNOW FOR CERTAIN MY FATHER'S SPOKEN TRUE
AND NOW I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT IT IS THAT I MUST DO!

SCENE ELEVEN

POLONIUS: I SHALL HIDE, MY LADY, 'NEATH THIS CURTAIN ON THE WALL.
WHEN HAMLET COMES TO SEE YOU, I WILL LISTEN TO IT ALL.
YOU MUST TELL HIM HE MUST STRAIGHTEN UP AND HE MUST FLY RIGHT.
DO NOT SUGAR COAT THIS; AND TELL IT HIM TONIGHT!

GERTRUDE: YES, I WILL, POLONIUS. YOUR WISDOM SHINES AGAIN.
I WILL TELL HIM STRAIGHT OUT, REGARDLESS OF HIS PAIN.

HAMLET: MOTHER, DEAR, YOU CALLED FOR ME. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY?

GERTRUDE: YOUR FATHER YOU'VE OFFENDED. FOR THIS YOU HAVE TO PAY.

HAMLET: MY FATHER? OH, MY UNCLE! I THINK YOU'VE GOT IT WRONG!
HE'LL NEVER BE MY FATHER. AND YOU MAY NOT BE MY MOTHER VERY
LONG.

GERTRUDE: HAMLET, DO NOT THREATEN ME! YOU WILL NOT MURDER ME!

POLONIUS: MURDER? OH, HELP! MURDER! THIS CAN NEVER BE!

HAMLET: (Hamlet stabs the curtain) A RAT BEHIND THE CURTAIN! I WILL KILL BEFORE
IT SPREADS!

POLONIUS: MY LADY, HE HAS STABBED ME! AND, I FEAR, I'LL SOON BE DEAD!
(Polonius dies)

GERTRUDE: O HAMLET! OH MY HAMLET! LOOK UPON WHAT YOU HAVE DONE!

HAMLET: OH, IT'S JUST POLONIUS! I THOUGHT I'D KILLED SOMEONE.

GERTRUDE: YOU'VE KILLED OUR DEAR OLD COUNSELLOR! IS THAT NOT BAD
ENOUGH?

HAMLET: HARDLY! KILL A KING AND MARRY HIS QUEEN! NOW THAT IS REALLY
ROUGH!

GERTRUDE: WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? ARE YOU MAD, MY SON? SURELY IT'S NOT TRUE!

HAMLET: A SORRY CHOICE IS LEFT TO YOU OF BROTHERS YOU HAVE WED!
TO END UP WITH THIS COUNTERFEIT! THE WRONG ONE, DAD, IS DEAD!

GERTRUDE: O, SAY NO MORE! IF THIS BE TRUE, IT'S TRUTH I CANNOT STAND!

HAMLET: IT'S TRUE AND YOU HAVE SLEPT WITH AN INCESTUOUS MAN!

GHOST: MY SON, I HOPE YOU'VE NOT FORGOT. MY KILLER LIVES AND YET
MY WIFE IS SO CONFUSED AND WEAK. THIS SHE DOES NOT GET.
HELP HER SO SHE UNDERSTANDS AND GETS BEYOND HER GUILT,
THEN LATER YOU CAN PUT YOUR SWORD INTO CLAUDIUS - TO THE
HILT.

HAMLET: O FATHER, YOU ARE SICK AND PALE! O MOTHER, DON'T YOU SEE?
THIS IS JUST A GHOST OF WHAT MY FATHER USED TO BE!

GERTRUDE: HAMLET, ARE YOU REALLY MAD? I DON'T SEE WHAT YOU SEE!

HAMLET: O MOTHER, IT'S WHAT UNCLE DID TO THE MAN DAD USED TO BE!

GERTRUDE: O SON OF MINE, I FEAR THIS THING HAS THROWN YOU OFF YOUR
BRAIN.

WILL I EVER HAVE MY SON AS SANE AS WAS BEFORE AGAIN?

HAMLET: MOTHER, I'VE NOT LOST MY MIND! I'VE FOUND IT, IF YOU WILL.
AND NOW ABOUT MY UNCLE, WILL YOU TAKE A BITTER PILL?

GERTRUDE: WHAT IS IT YOU WILL HAVE ME DO? PLEASE TELL ME NOW, MY SON.
WHAT IS IT YOU WILL HAVE ME DO? YOU KNOW IT WILL BE DONE.

HAMLET: SLEEP NOT AGAIN IN UNCLE'S BED, THOUGH HE MAY TEMPT YOU TO.
IT IS DISEASED AND POISONOUS. YOU AND HE ARE THROUGH!