This pack has been written to complement the film of the RSC’s 2008 production of *Hamlet*. The inspiration for the exercises has come from the rehearsals for this production. The active approaches to the play are supported by behind-the-scenes footage, performance history and clips from the film itself hosted on www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet.

There are four types of activity within the pack which are illustrated by the following symbols:

- **WATCH** Watch a clip from the show or an interview with the creative team
- **TRY** An activity for students to try on their feet
- **REHEARSAL NOTES** Contextual information from the rehearsal room
- **COMPARE** Compare this production to other productions or students’ work.

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EXPLORING ACT ONE SCENE TWO: THE COURT SCENE

In the early stages of rehearsals actors were asked to explore descriptions of the characters of Old Hamlet (the dead King) and Claudius. The purpose was to discover whether the court would consider Claudius to be a preferable King to Old Hamlet.

This exercise will allow your students to do the same.

- Explain that students will be creating statues or still images of Claudius and Old Hamlet.
- Split the group into pairs. In each pair give one student the character facts (page 15) for Claudius and the other student the character facts for Old Hamlet.
- Ask the students to mould their partner into the character they have the facts for.
- Split the group in half in their roles. So one half of the room is Claudius and the other Old Hamlet and ask them to strike their poses.
- Ask the students to reflect on what the differences are between the two characters.
- Who would they prefer their country to be ruled by?

In this production the actors decided that they preferred the rule of Claudius, a peace-keeping King who enjoyed a good party! This is important in the staging as it is when we, the audience, and the Court first see Claudius as King. The staging of this opening court scene is instrumental in revealing the relationships between the characters in Hamlet.

When developing the world of the play the designer, Rob Jones, was inspired by photographs of contemporary European Royal Families in Hello Magazine.

Creating the World, Rob Jones talking about his design for the production: www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/making_of/on_stage_creating_the_world.shtml
This exercise explores the relationships in the opening scene of the play using one of the design inspirations for the production. Students will create a HELLO! magazine shoot for the Court Scene and explore the relationships between the characters. This exercise also offers an opportunity to develop their characters as new information is revealed to the students.

- Explain that in this exercise the group is going to be creating a photo shoot for HELLO! magazine.

- Ask them to think about what their responsibilities are as members of a court – how should they behave? Also ask them to think about what they might want to show the public in a photo-shoot. A more confident group might want to choose whether any of the characters would try and sabotage the shoot.

- Split the group into groups of six.

- Allocate a character to each person (Gertrude, Claudius, Laertes, Hamlet, Ophelia) or the role of photographer.

- Give each character their character facts (see page 16).

- Ask them to create a pose for the beginning of the scene before any words have been said. They should show their feelings towards the other characters by standing near to or far away from them. They can also choose who they are looking at, or not, and what facial expression they have.

- The photographer needs to make sure that they are all in the frame; if possible they should have access to a digital camera and take a picture of the scene.

- After each group has created an initial image explain that you are going to be the voice of Claudius. Give the first piece of news that Claudius delivers (news items on page??). Ask the characters to move accordingly – how do they feel about this news? Does it change their opinion of Claudius or any of the other characters? Ask the photographers to take another picture (news sheet is on p17).

- Continue with each new piece of news.

- Ask groups either to present their image sequences to each other, or to use the pictures that they have taken to create a magazine spread for HELLO!

- Ask the students to reflect on each others’ images - what are they saying about each of the characters?
Creating a Backstory The actors talking about Gertrude and Claudius in the Court Scene:
www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/making_of/on_stage_backstory.shtml

Ask the group to reflect on the film clip. What have the actors in this production chosen? What are the similarities/differences?

Finally, ask the students to compare this production to other, earlier stage productions (1997 and 2004). What does the positioning of characters do to reveal the relationships within a scene?
1997: www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/past_productions/rsc_stage_1997.shtml#court
2004: www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/past_productions/rsc_stage_2004.shtml#court
EXPLORING ACT TWO SCENE TWO: ‘TO BE OR NOT TO BE’

Audience members who are very familiar with the play may have been surprised to hear the ‘To be or not to be’ speech so early. One of the jobs a director of Shakespeare has to do is produce the script that the company will use. A theatre director has to edit the play according to what will work best for the company and the setting they have decided on for the play. So where did Greg start his editing?

Greg Doran talks about his editing process and this speech: www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/making_of/on_stage_choosing_a_version.shtml

Greg calls one of the techniques he used to help this process, Crossroads. He encourages the actors to think about every option available to them every time they make a decision. This removes the element of predictability from the speech.

Rehearsal: Crossroads Technique Greg Doran talking about how he rehearsed key moments: www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/making_of/on_stage_rehearsal.shtml
The following activities investigate Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' speech. In this speech Hamlet presents himself with a number of crossroads to deal with. Even if students know the play well, ask them to approach this exercise as if they have never seen the speech before and don't know the outcome to the play. They should consider each decision to be happening at that moment for Hamlet.

- Give each player a section of the speech to learn (page 18). Ask the group to stand in a circle.
- The player with the first line steps into the circle and delivers their line.
- The player with the second section enters the circle and says his/her line to the first player as though continuing a conversation.
- The player with the third section enters the space and says his/her lines to the first two players as though further continuing the conversation. The first two players should react to this new addition to their thoughts.
- And so on. Discuss this exercise with players. Talk about the crossroads in the speech. How did it feel to deliver the speech in this way? Does Hamlet have a clear idea of what he wants to do? How can they tell?

Because there are so many decisions for Hamlet to make in this speech there are lots of different ways it can be presented.

The archive of 'To Be or Not to Be':

www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/past_productions/1948.shtml
• You can also ask the groups to look at YouTube for: ‘To be or not to be’

• They could do this in pairs or small groups. (Alternatively, this could be a homework option.)

• There are hundreds of videos of people (and cartoons, plastic toys, sock puppets and so on) doing their interpretation of this famous speech.

• Ask each pair or group to select three interpretations of the speech which they find particularly interesting, demonstrate these to the other groups and explain why they selected them.

• As an extension, your groups could prepare their own version of this speech to video and upload to YouTube.
EXPLORING ACT ONE SCENE THREE: POLONIUS’ FAMILY

Greg Doran believes that every actor should understand exactly what they are saying in order to make the most of their role.

Rehearsal: Approaching the Text Greg and the actors talk about how they went about this in rehearsals. www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/making_of/on_stage_rehearsal.shtml

Firstly, Greg asked the actors to read the Shakespearean text aloud, and then they would discuss the meanings of the words and any misunderstandings. Finally, the actors were asked to paraphrase their speeches in their own words to see if they discovered anything new.

This exercise allows students to explore this rehearsal technique and also consider the relationship between Polonius, Laertes and Ophelia.

- Ask the students to get into groups of three.
- Ask each trio to read the scene (page 19-20) through and underline any words that they don’t understand.
- As a whole group, discuss the difficult words.
- Ask the groups of three to paraphrase their speeches in modern English.
- What were the clear messages that came out of this second reading?
- Finally, ask the students to return to the Shakespearean text.
- Ask them to reflect on how the final reading is different from the first. What have they discovered about the relationships within this scene?

Of course, this is only the first step in making decisions about playing a scene.

Rehearsal: Playing the Family Polonius Oliver Ford Davis, who plays Polonius, describes what the actors did to add more life to the scene: www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/making_of/on_stage_playing_family_polonius.shtml
EXPLORING ACT TWO SCENE TWO: THE PLAYERS

During rehearsals the actors explore not only the play that they are going to perform but also other interpretations of the play and sources that it has been based on. In this rehearsal period the actors even watched The Simpson’s episode that is based on Hamlet.

Exploring sources can help illuminate choices that the actors make and help you think about the play in a different way. The Player’s speech in Act Two Scene Two is Priam’s story and is based on Aeneus talking about the fall of Troy in Book II of The Aeniad. During rehearsals the actors explored this story dramatically to understand the source material.

This activity gives students an opportunity to consider the story of Priam and the impact that this story might have on the rest of the play, and on Hamlet’s actions in particular.

• Split the students into groups of five.

• Explain the background to this part of The Aenied or set this as homework. A good summary is here: http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/aeneid/summary.html. The section of the story that is referred to by the Player is just after the fall of Troy when Priam’s son has been killed by Phyrus.

• Give them the text of Priam’s story (they can either use the original on page 21 or a translation, but it should be a poetry translation). Ask them to assign roles and act it out. They can choose to have a narrator or not, or to speak or not. You might choose to give each group the full story or to split it between them.

• Watch the finished versions of the story.

• Then try adding actions to the Player’s speech.

• Ask students to reflect on: Which images were the same and which were different? Why did Shakespeare use this story within Hamlet? Why do you think he emphasises particular moments? Were there any moments within the story that remind you of other events within Hamlet? Why would this speech encourage Hamlet to seek his revenge or to use the play as a way to test Claudius? (You might want to look at Hamlet’s next soliloquy to explore this further.) How useful is it to know Priam’s story in relation to the rest of the play?
Greg Doran decided to repeat the image of Priam hesitating with his sword in the air, as shown by the player, when Hamlet takes the dagger to Claudius.

Interpreting the Player’s Speech: A clip about the Player’s role within the play.
www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/key_scenes/players_speech.shtml
EXPLORING ACT FIVE SCENE ONE: THE DESIGN OF THE GRAVEYARD

The Gravediggers’ scene is different to the rest of the play. It’s set outside and is a much more light-hearted discussion about life and death than elsewhere in the play. In this exercise students can explore the design of the Graveyard.

Interpreting the Gravediggers’ Scene:
www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/key_scenes/gravediggers_scene.shtml

One of the most challenging things about the scene is the scenery requirements: there needs to be a grave. On The Courtyard stage it is difficult to do big scene changes because there isn’t a curtain, so the designer had to find a way to transform the stage from a court setting to a graveyard. When they are creating designs, designers make model boxes which show the different scenes in miniature.

The Set Designer To find out more about the design of the production:
www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/making_of/set_designer.shtml

The Gravedigger (Mark Hadfield) speaks with Hamlet (David Tennant) at the graveside
Ellie Kurttz; © Illuminations/Royal Shakespeare Company
In this exercise the students can work as set designers creating a graveyard for the Gravediggers’ scene.

- Read through the Gravediggers’ scene (page 23-24).
- All together consider what scenery or props are written into the text.
- Explain that using these fundamentals and a design brief the students will be creating the setting for the graveyard.
- Hand out the Design Challenge (page 25).
- Students can then draw or make their design. Using the template on page 26 students can make their own back wall and Courtyard stage floor to place their design onto, or they can draw a birds-eye view.
- Before the lesson, or in between two sessions working on this, you might ask the students to create a mood board for the graveyard looking at possible props, scenery, images and colours that they want to use.
- Once the students have completed their designs ask one person from each group to pitch it to the others. Ask them to include:
  - what they got from the text
  - how they chose what else to put in the scene

Compare the students’ designs with the final stage design. How similar / different are they?

The Gravediggers’ scene is the one that altered most dramatically in the filming of it. On stage, a grave has to be represented so the audience know that it’s a grave. On film, people are much more literal so they used an outside location and actually dug a grave.

In other productions the Gravedigger scene has been used to show many different aspects of the play. Ask your group to have a look at these examples in the performance history 1948 and 1965. Compare these to the 2008 design and the decisions the students made.

www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/past_productions/rsc_stage_1948.shtml#gravediggers
www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/past_productions/rsc_stage_1965.shtml#gravediggers
Shakespeare’s plays don’t have stage directions beyond actors’ entrances and exits. This means that for every production the director and company have to make decisions about what happens in each scene. The final scene of *Hamlet* has a lot of action for the company to stage. As well as the speaking parts there are often more people on stage as observers to the scene. These observer roles are just as important as the speaking parts; their reactions can help the audience to work out what they should be focusing on.
In this activity students will explore creating stage directions for the final scene before looking at the choices made by the actors and director in this production.

- Divide the students into groups of ten (Gertrude, Claudius, Hamlet, Laertes, Horatio, Osric, and four courtiers).
- Ask each group to read through the scene (p28-30) and assign roles. As this is a long scene you might want to divide it amongst the groups.
- Ask the groups to read the scene again making a note of any actions that their character has on their script e.g. Hamlet hits Laertes, Gertrude takes the drink.
- Ask the groups to try the scene on its feet including the actions they have found.

Explain that the actions written into the text are only the first clue when exploring a play. For instance, the courtiers won't do very much if they only rely on actions written into the text. The actors and directors make decisions about what they do and why they do it at key moments.

- For each character, think about actions in response to another character’s action. For example, Claudius reacting to Gertrude drinking.
- Try the scene again with these gestures added. What difference does it make to the scene? Are there any changes the groups would like to make?
- Show the different versions of the scene. What elements has each group brought to life?

Explain that it is these choices that make each production different; although the basic actions will be the same, the reactions to them can tell different stories.

Playing the Final Scene: Greg Doran and the actors talking about how they approached this scene. What are the similarities/differences?  
[www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/making_of/on_stage_final_scene.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/hamlet/making_of/on_stage_final_scene.shtml)
Resources

Hamlet (David Tennant) and his mother, Gertrude (Penny Downie) in the closet scene of the 2009 film
Ellie Kurttz; © Illuminations/Royal Shakespeare Company
## Comparing Claudius to Old Hamlet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLAUDIUS</th>
<th>OLD HAMLET</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sends out diplomats rather than fighting Norway</td>
<td>Has led many battles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has thrown big celebrations to celebrate his wedding</td>
<td>Was away from home fighting a lot of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to keep Hamlet close to keep an eye on him</td>
<td>Is known to be a vicious fighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allowed Hamlet to go away to university</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Character Facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</table>
| **Gertrude** | • Your husband has died  
| | • You have married his brother  
| | • You are the Queen of Denmark  
| | • You have one son, Hamlet |
| **Claudius** | • You are the brother of the dead King  
| | • You are now the King of Denmark  
| | • You are Hamlet’s Uncle |
| **Laertes** | • You are the son of the King’s top advisor, Polonius  
| | • You are at university but have returned to pay your respects to the dead King  
| | • You have a sister, Ophelia |
| **Hamlet** | • You are the son of the dead King  
| | • You are at university and have returned for your father’s funeral  
| | • You are still wearing your mourning clothes despite the fact that since the funeral your mother has remarried  
| | • You are struggling to get over your father’s death  
| | • You have been friendly with Ophelia recently |
| **Ophelia** | • You are Laertes’ sister  
| | • You are the daughter of the King’s top advisor, Polonius  
| | • You have been friendly with Hamlet recently |
| **Polonius** | • You are the King’s top advisor.  
| | • You have two children, Laertes and Ophelia  
| | • You are keen for your son to return to university |
**CLAUDIUS’ SPEECH**

This is Claudius’ opening speech. The headlines are designed to give the news in a concise way but we would recommend that you also use Shakespeare’s words with your students in this activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headline</th>
<th>Speech</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Although we are still in morning for the Old King, I would like to present you with my new wife, Queen Gertrude.** | Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother’s death  
The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom  
To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature  
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,  
Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,  
Have we, as ‘twere with a defeated joy, --  
With one auspicious and one dropping eye,  
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
In equal scale weighing delight and dole, --  
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr’ed  
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone  
With this affair along. |
| **Voltemand and Cornelius to make peace with Norway**                  | Now follows that you know, young Fortinbras,  
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,  
Or thinking by our late dear brother’s death  
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,  
Colleagued with the dream of his advantage,  
He hath not failed to pester us with message,  
Importing the surrender of those lands  
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,  
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.  
Now thus the business is: we have here writ  
To Norway, uncle to young Fortinbras  
That he suppress his nephew’s further march  
And threatening enterprise toward our state.  
We here dispatch you good Cornelius  
And Voltemand for bearers of this greeting  
To old Norway |
| **Laertes to return to university**                                    | Take thy fair hour, Laertes: time be thine,  
And thy best graces spend it at thy will! |
| **Hamlet, next in line for the throne, is to stay in Denmark and not return to university** | *(Hamlet)*  
You are the most immediate to our throne;  
And with no less nobility of love  
Than that which dearest father bears his son,  
Do I impart towards you. For your intent  
In going back to school in Wittenberg,  
It is most retrograde to our desire:  
And we beseech you bend you to remain  
Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye,  
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son. |
HAMLET: To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?

To die, to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to,

'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd.
To die, to sleep;

To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause:

There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns,

puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;

And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,

And lose the name of action.
The Polonius Family (edited)

LAERTES My necessaries are embarked, farewell: And, sister, as the winds give benefit And convoy is assistant, do not sleep But let me hear from you.

OPHELIA Do you doubt that?

LAERTES For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour, Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood, No more.

OPHELIA No more but so.

LAERTES Think it no more, Perhaps he loves you now, but you must fear, His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own; For he himself is subject to his birth: Be wary then: best safety lies in fear: Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

OPHELIA I shall the effect of this good lesson keep, As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother, Do not, as some ungracious pastors do Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven; Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads, And recks not his own rede.

LAERTES O, fear me not. I stay too long. But here my father comes.

Enter POLONIUS

POLONIUS Yet here, Laertes! There; my blessing with thee! And these few precepts in thy memory See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue, Nor any unproportioned thought his act. Neither a borrower nor a lender be; For loan oft loses both itself and friend, And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry. This above all: to thine own self be true, Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!
LAERTES  Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.
Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well
What I have said to you.

OPHELIA  'Tis in my memory locked,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

LAERTES  Farewell.  Exit.

POLONIUS  What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

OPHELIA  So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

POLONIUS  Marry, well bethought:
'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you; and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous:
What is between you? give me up the truth.

OPHELIA  My lord, he hath importuned me with love
In honourable fashion.

POLONIUS  Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know,
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both
You must not take for fire. From this time
Be somewhat scanter of your maiden presence;

OPHELIA  I shall obey, my lord.  Exeunt
Behold! Polites, one of Priam's sons,  
Pursued by Pyrrhus, there for safety runs.  
Thro' swords and foes, amaz'd and hurt, he flies  
Thro' empty courts and open galleries.  
Him Pyrrhus, urging with his lance, pursues,  
And often reaches, and his thrusts renewes.  
The youth, transfix'd, with lamentable cries,  
Expires before his wretched parent's eyes:  
Whom gasping at his feet when Priam saw,  
The fear of death gave place to nature's law;  
And, shaking more with anger than with age,  
'The gods,' said he, 'requite thy brutal rage!  
As sure they will, barbarian, sure they must,  
If there be gods in heav'n, and gods be just-  
Who tak'st in wrongs an insolent delight;  
With a son's death t' infect a father's sight.  
Not he, whom thou and lying fame conspire  
To call thee his- not he, thy vaunted sire,  
Thus us'd my wretched age: the gods he fear'd,  
The laws of nature and of nations heard.  
He cheer'd my sorrows, and, for sums of gold,  
The bloodless carcass of my Hector sold;  
Pitied the woes a parent underwent,  
And sent me back in safety from his tent.'  
"This said, his feeble hand a javelin threw,  
Which, flutt'ring, seem'd to loiter as it flew:  
Just, and but barely, to the mark it held,  
And faintly tinkled on the brazen shield.  
"Then Pyrrhus thus: 'Go thou from me to fate,  
And to my father my foul deeds relate.  
Now die!' With that he dragg'd the trembling sire,  
Slidd'ring thro' clotter'd blood and holy mire,  
(The mingled paste his murder'd son had made,)  
Haul'd from beneath the violated shade,  
And on the sacred pile the royal victim laid.  
His right hand held his bloody falchion bare,  
His left he twisted in his hoary hair;  
Then, with a speeding thrust, his heart he found:  
The lukewarm blood came rushing thro' the wound,  
And sanguine streams distain'd the sacred ground.  
Thus Priam fell, and shar'd one common fate  
With Troy in ashes, and his ruin'd state:
FIRST PLAYER’S SPEECH

FIRST PLAYER

‘Anon he finds him
Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword,
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command: unequal match’d,
Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide;
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
The unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus’ ear: for, lo! his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seem’d i’ the air to stick:
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
And, like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.
But, as we often see, against some storm
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless and the orb below
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region, so, after Pyrrhus’ pause,
Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work;
And never did the Cyclops’ hammers fall
On Mars his armours forged for proof eterne
With less remorse than Pyrrhus’ bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.
‘But who, O, who had seen the mobled queen—’
‘Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames
With bisson rheum; a clout about that head
Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,
About her lank and all o’er-teemed loins
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up;
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep’d,
‘Gainst Fortune’s state would treason have pronounced
But if the gods themselves did see her then
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband’s limbs,
The instant burst of clamour that she made,
Unless things mortal move them not at all,
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,
And passion in the gods.’
GRAVEDIGGER SCENE (edited)

1ST GRAVEDIGGER: Is she to be buried in Christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

2ND GRAVEDIGGER: I tell thee she is: and therefore make her grave straight: the crowner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

1ST GRAVEDIGGER: How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

2ND GRAVEDIGGER: Why, ’tis found so.

1ST GRAVEDIGGER: Give me leave: here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good; if the man go to this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes — mark you that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself: argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

2ND GRAVEDIGGER: Will you ha’ the truth on’t? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out of Christian burial.

1ST GRAVEDIGGER: Why, there thou say’st: and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentleman but gardeners, ditches and grave-makers: they hold up Adam’s profession. I’ll put another question to thee.

2ND GRAVEDIGGER: Go to.

1ST GRAVEDIGGER: What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?
2ND GRAVEDIGGER: The gallows-maker, for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

1ST GRAVEDIGGER: I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows does well. To't again, come.

2ND GRAVEDIGGER: ‘Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?’

1ST GRAVEDIGGER: Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

2ND GRAVEDIGGER: Marry, now I can tell.

1ST GRAVEDIGGER: To’t.

2ND GRAVEDIGGER: Mass, I cannot tell.

1ST GRAVEDIGGER: Cudgel thy brains no more about it, and when you are asked this question next, say a grave-maker. The houses he makes lasts till doomsday.
GRAVEYARD SCENE DESIGN CHALLENGE

- You have already agreed with the director that the floor of the stage will be a shiny black and that the backdrop will be mirrors.

- Your challenge is to create a graveyard that can be placed on top of the basic floor and backdrop design. You cannot cover the backdrop or the whole of the floor. You have access to one trapdoor.

- Use the following questions and statements to help you:
  
  * This is a production set in modern times.
  
  * What sort of characters are the Gravediggers – what might they have with them while they are working? What might they wear?
  
  * This is a scene that Hamlet enters with Horatio.
  
  * There must be room for a lot of cast members on the stage as Ophelia’s funeral party joins the scene later.
  
  * This is a comedy scene that becomes Ophelia’s funeral.
Plan of the stage
COMPARING STAGE AND SCREEN GRAVEYARD DESIGNS

The Courtyard set for the Gravediggers’ Scene
© Royal Shakespeare Company

Second Gravedigger (Sam Alexander) and Gravedigger (Mark Hadfield)
Ellie Kurtz; © Illuminations/Royal Shakespeare Company
FINAL SCENE (edited)

KING Come, Hamlet, come and take this hand from me.

HAMLET Give me your pardon, sir: I've done you wrong; But pardon't, as you are a gentleman. This presence knows, Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil Free me so far in your most generous thoughts, That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house, And hurt my brother.

LAERTES I am satisfied. I do receive your offered love like love, And will not wrong it.

KING Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet, You know the wager?

HAMLET Very well, my lord:

LAERTES This is too heavy, let me see another.

HAMLET This likes me well. These foils have all a length?

OSRIC Ay, my good lord.

HAMLET Come on, sir.

LAERTES Come on, sir.

HAMLET One.

LAERTES No.

HAMLET Judgement.

OSRIC A hit, a very palpable hit.

KING Stay; give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine: Here's to thy health. Give him the cup.

HAMLET I'll play this bout first: set it by awhile. Come. Another hit; what say you?

LAERTES A touch, a touch, I do confess.

KING Our son shall win.
GERTRUDE  The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

HAMLET  Good madam!

KING  Gertrude, do not drink!

GERTRUDE  I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.

KING  It is the poison cup.  It is too late.

HAMLET  I dare not drink yet, madam; by and by.

GERTRUDE  Come, let me wipe thy face.

HAMLET  Come, for the third, Laertes, you but dally; I pray you pass with your best violence; I am afeard you make a wanton of me.

LAERTES  Say you so? come on.

OSRIC  Nothing, neither way.

LAERTES  Have at you now!

KING  Part them; they are incensed.

HAMLET  Nay, come.  Again!.

OSRIC  Look to the queen there, ho!

HORATIO  They bleed on both sides.  How is it, my lord?

OSRIC  How is’t, Laertes?

LAERTES  Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric; I am justly kill’d with mine own treachery.

HAMLET  How does the queen?

KING  She swounds to see them bleed.

GERTRUDE  No, no, the drink, the drink, — O my dear Hamlet, — The drink, the drink! I am poison’d.

HAMLET  O, villainy! How? Let the door be lock’d: Treachery! Seek it out.
LAERTES  It is here, Hamlet:
Hamlet, thou art slain;
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unblunted and envenom’d: the foul practice
Hath turned itself on me Io, here I lie,
Never to rise again: thy mother’s poison’d.
I can no more: the king, the king’s to blame.

HAMLET  The point! -- envenom’d too!
Then, venom, to thy work.  

ALL  Treason! Treason!

KING  O, yet defend me, friends; I am but hurt.

HAMLET  Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane,
Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?
Follow my mother.

LAERTES  He is justly served;
It is a poison temper’d by himself.
Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet:
Mine and my father’s death come not upon thee,
Nor thine on me.

HAMLET  Horatio, I am dead;
Thou livest; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

HORATIO  Never believe it:
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane:
Here’s yet some liquor left.

HAMLET  As thou’rt a man,
Give me the cup: let go; by heaven, I'll have’t.
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story. The rest is silence

HORATIO  Now cracks a noble heart. Goodnight, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!