

Geneology / Character Mapping

• Hamlet, Prince of Denmark •

• Old Hamlet •

NEVER SEEN IN HUMAN FORM BUT CHARACTERIZED THROUGH THE MEMORIES OF HAMLET AND THE APPEARANCES OF THE GHOST, WHO CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN MURDERED BY HIS BROTHER AND BEGS HIS SON TO AVENGE HIM.

• Gertrude •

Queen of Denmark, Hamlet's mother. Recently married to Claudius at outset of play. Characterized as a shallow, weak woman seeking affection and status MORE THAN THE HAPPINESS OF HER SON.

• Claudius •

King of Denmark, Hamlet's uncle, and the play's antagonist. Claudius is a scheming politician (an apparent better ruler than his brother) driven by lust, power and ambition (a true Machiavellian) he turns to murder.

• Polonius •

Lord Chamberlain of Claudius' court, father of Laertes and Ophelia. Companion in the King's schemes of disposing of Hamlet, often using his daughter as bait.

• Hamlet •

The title character, Prince of Denmark, protagonist, son of Old Hamlet and Queen Gertrude, nephew of present King, Claudius. Hamlet is bitter and cynical at the outset of the play, contrary to his Renaissance Christian Humanist beliefs, disgusted with his uncle's schemings and his mother's hasty marriage. Trained to be both a scholar and King at the University of Wittenburg, Hamlet uses the disguise of madness and the purpose of "scourge and minister" to avenge his father's most foul and unnatural murder.

• Ophelia •

Polonius' daughter, sister to Laertes. Ophelia is a sweet innocent girl. Contrary to Hamlet's "get thee to a nunnery" speech. She is the chaste object of Hamlet's affections, but is torn between obeying her father and brother and following her love. She is eventually driven to madness by the machinations of Hamlet and her father, resulting in her drowning.

• Laertes •

Polonius' son and Ophelia's brother, a student in France who advises his sister to beware of the advances of Hamlet. Passionate and quick to action, Laertes avenges his father's death by baiting him with an envenomed sword, but also falls prey to the poison.