

Harbourfront Centre's World Stage
and
Necessary Angel Theatre
Company Present

HAMLET

Education Resource Kit

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November 19-29, 2009

School Visits
Programme
Grades 11-12

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NECESSARY ANGEL
THEATRE COMPANY

worldstage

Oct to May
2009 • 10

Necessary Angel Theatre Company HAMLET



Grades 11-12

November 19-29
Enwave Theatre

Part of Harbourfront Centre's
WORLDSTAGE

Unparalleled Adventures in Learning!

Harbourfront Centre is an innovative non-profit cultural organisation, which creates events and activities of excellence that enliven, educate and entertain a diverse public, all within a collection of distinctive venues in the heart of Toronto's downtown waterfront.

For more than 30 years, Harbourfront Centre School Visits has been offering diverse, innovative, curriculum-based programming in contemporary arts and culture for school groups. Our progressive and innovative programmes provide engaging educational experiences that supplement in-classroom units to more than 30,000 students every year.

This year, we are pleased to partner with Harbourfront Centre's WORLDSTAGE to offer unparalleled experiences for teachers and students that explore contemporary cultural expression from local, national and international perspectives.

Curriculum Connections: English (Grades 11-12); Learning to Understand – Analyzing texts, Critical Literacy, Understanding Presentation Strategies: Reading and Literature Studies: Making Inferences, Understanding Texts, Analyzing and Evaluating Texts. Dramatic Arts (Grades 11-12); Analyzing a Dramatic Script, Exploring Subtext.

HOW TO USE THIS KIT AND STRUCTURE YOUR VISIT

This kit is intended for teachers of grades 11-12, although you do not need to be a teacher to enjoy it. Our aim is to provide a useful resource beyond the life of the performance and to support varied classroom projects. Kits include both pre and post visit activity suggestions, in hopes that teachers will prepare students for their Harbourfront Centre experience, and follow up in the classroom afterward to get the most out of their visit to Harbourfront Centre.

This kit includes:

Pre-Visit Activities: The pre-visit activities are useful for activating your students' prior knowledge about the topic of your visit. They will introduce your class to some of the topics that will be covered and as a result will make some of the discussions even richer. The performance of HAMLET contains extreme content. It is recommended that educators complete the pre-visit activities with students to prepare them for the content of the performance.

Post-Visit Activities: These activities will give you the opportunity to capitalize on the excitement that your students will feel towards the topics explored during their visit to the Harbourfront Centre. The activities will make a number of cross-curricular connections.

Teacher's Notes: This section will provide a lot of the research materials covered during your visit. This information will be useful both before and after your visit.

Links to Learning: This section will provide you with a variety of resources that will be helpful to you should you decide to continue exploring the topics covered during your visit.

FURTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE

If you have questions, or require further resources to support your visit or any education programme at Harbourfront Centre, please contact our School Visits department at:

416.973.4091 or

registrar@harbourfrontcentre.com

About Harbourfront Centre's World Stage

Harbourfront Centre, on Toronto's waterfront, is an innovative non-profit cultural organisation, which creates events and activities of excellence that enliven, educate and entertain a diverse public. Since its inception as a federal Crown Corporation established in 1972, Harbourfront Centre has been introducing Toronto audiences to artists and art forms that would not normally be seen in commercial venues, exploring new and bold frontiers in the arts and creative expression. Our role as a "cultural port" is a fundamental aspect of our existence: making lasting, meaningful connections between local, regional, national and international artists and audiences.

World Stage

World Stage is a series of international contemporary performance, offering presentations from some of the world's leading artists. This cross-disciplinary celebration of international performance allows for a further exploration and revitalization of our commitment to both dance and theatre and all the work that falls in between.

Programming Vision

The vision of World Stage is to embrace a new generation of contemporary cultural expression, combining theatre, dance and multidisciplinary performance, works of scale, scope and cultural significance, in a way that is provocative, imaginative and energizing. In assembling the programme for the 2009-2010 season, we aspire to present work that will inspire, challenge and question not only our audience, but the artists in our community, perhaps ultimately affecting, shaping and/or influencing artistic practice, consciously or subconsciously, by having a sampling of work from the stages of the world come to Toronto. The vision of World Stage is to provide a context – local, national and international – in which local audiences and the public can engage with contemporary performance.

About the Performance

A radical re-visioning of one of the world's greatest plays.

Toronto's Necessary Angel partners with one of the UK's most provocative theatre makers, director and designer Graham McLaren (*Medea*, Theatre Babel), to investigate a rigorously pared down *Hamlet*, combining the aesthetic of European theatre with the poetry of the British stage. A unique, immediate and violent 110-minute live theatre experiment seething with amorality where nothing is set and every performance is different. This is your chance to be the first to see this mesmerizing re-imagining of Shakespeare's incandescent work.

Directed and Designed by Graham McLaren
Lighting Design & Production Management by Andrea Lundy
Music & Sound Design by Alexander MacSween
Stage Managed by Crystal Salverda
Assistant Costume Design by Melanie McNeill
Fight Choreographed by Simon Fon

This performance contains violent and disturbing content. Themes discussed in the performance include suicide, vengeance, sexuality, incest, revenge, misogyny.

It is strongly recommended that teachers visit Harbourfront Centre's World Stage website to see still photographs and video clips of the performance, and to obtain further information about the show.

<http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/worldstage0910/necessaryangel/>

Pre-Visit Activities

The following lessons are for use before your visit to the Harbourfront centre. The intention of these lessons is to activate the prior knowledge of your students and to briefly introduce some of the ideas that will be covered during the performance. These activities, of course, are not mandatory, but will enrich the overall Harbourfront Centre experience.

Activity #1:

Traditional & Non Traditional Hamlet

You are likely studying the traditional play text in class. *Hamlet* was meant to be read and seen, so it is recommended to watch a traditional performance of *Hamlet* with your class before attending the performance at Harbourfront Centre. This will allow the students to analyze and compare between traditional and contemporary interpretations of the play.

ACTIVITY: We recommend watching one of the following feature film adaptations of the play prior to your visit:

Hamlet (1996)

Director: Kenneth Branagh

Synopsis (from Internet Movie Database): Hamlet, son of the king of Denmark, is summoned home for his father's funeral and his mother's wedding to his uncle. In a supernatural episode, he discovers that his uncle, whom he hates anyway, murdered his father. In an incredibly convoluted plot--the most complicated and most interesting in all literature--he manages to (impossible to put this in exact order) feign (or perhaps not to feign) madness, murder the "prime minister," love and then un-love an innocent whom he drives to madness, plot and then un-plot against the uncle, direct a play within a play, successfully conspire against the lives of two well-meaning friends, and finally take his revenge on the uncle, but only at the cost of almost every life on stage, including his own and his mother's.

Hamlet (1964)

Director: Sir John Gielgud

Synopsis (from Internet Movie Database): Sir John Gielgud directed this "Electronovision" taping of the play "Hamlet" performed at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre on Broadway in 1964 ("Electronovision" was a short-lived gimmick which was basically closed-circuit TV). The most unusual thing about this film is that the actors are in street clothes instead of period costumes, and the sets are minimal, to say the least.

Hamlet (1969)

Director: Tony Richardson

Synopsis (from Internet Movie Database): Shot during the day at the Roundhouse Theatre, where the cast was performing the play in the evening, Tony Richardson's adaptation of the Shakespeare classic stars Nicol Williamson as the eponymous prince. The well-known play of the Danish prince consumed with self-loathing for his inability to avenge his father's death at the hand of his uncle, King Claudius (Anthony Hopkins), receives a few twists from the innovative director. Hopkins, Mark Dignam, Judy Parfitt, Gordon Jackson, and Roger Livesy all contribute to a strong ensemble.

Hamlet (1990)

Director: Kevin Kline

Synopsis (from Internet Movie Database): Kevin Kline directs this 1990 New York Shakespeare Festival production of HAMLET, a production that received great critical acclaim during its stage run. This version was specially produced for television, and all the strengths of the production, mainly its fine cast of daring actors, shine through. Kline stars as Hamlet, the tortured prince, along with Dana Ivey as Gertrude and Brian Murray as Claudius, and this trio of principals take on the classic material with a vigour and freshness rarely seen in other, glossier, filmed versions of the play.

Hamlet (1964)

Director: Grigori Kozintsev

Synopsis (from Internet Movie Database): Grigori Kozintsev's beautiful adaptation of the Bard classic is presented in Russian with English subtitles. Based on a translation by author Boris Pasternak, this version features simple yet effective imagery.

© **Activity #2:**

Discussion of Themes

A discussion of the themes in the play will help to prepare the students for some of the content in Hamlet. These themes can be related to the students' everyday lives. Themes that are prevalent in Hamlet are (from www.merriam-webster.com):

Vengeance

Revenge (synonym vengeance) is a harmful action against a person or group as a response to a (real or perceived) grievance.

Suicide

Suicide (Latin *suicidium*, from *sui caedere*, to kill oneself) is the intentional killing of one's self.

Misogyny

Misogyny is hatred (or contempt) of women. Misogyny comes from Greek *misogunia*.

Sexuality

Sexuality is the quality or state of being sexual: **a** : the condition of having sex **b** : sexual activity **c** : expression of sexual receptivity or interest especially when excessive

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure refers to the influence exerted by a peer group in encouraging a person to change his or her attitudes, values, or behaviour in order to conform to group norms.

⊙ Post-Visit Activities

The purpose of these activities is to extend on the learning that took place during your visit to the Harbourfront Centre. They are a great opportunity to capitalize on the excitement and that your students may be feeling about the topics they have experienced.

⊙ Activity #1: Post Performance Class Discussion

To facilitate engaging discussion in the classroom after the performance, here are some lead-in topics that may assist you:

- 1. Depression/Suicide.** Consider the role of depression in the performance. How was it represented? How does Hamlet's feigned (is it feigned?) depression compare with the feelings experienced by Ophelia?
- 2. The Interior Voice.** Hamlet probably has the most soliloquies of any character in Shakespeare. What kind of mind does this reveal with what kinds of concerns? What elements of his character remain hidden to the audience? What does he expose about the character of humanity itself? How does the interior setting of the performance affect this feeling? How important is seeing the world through Hamlet's eyes?
- 3. Supernatural.** Old Hamlet's ghost is a different kind of spirit from the ones we've met before and he is the only supernatural element in the play. What role does the ghost play and how does this affect Hamlet? Why doesn't the Queen see the ghost?
- 4. Acting and Actors (for Drama students).** With Hamlet acting crazy, and the player acting out a murder before the king, in what ways is acting used in the performance? Consider Hamlet's speech. How does the play within the play work? How did this interpretation of the play fit into that?
- 5. Friends and Family.** How are familial relationships represented in Hamlet? How are the son and father, brother and brother relationships confused? What is Hamlet's relationship with his mother? What is Hamlet's obligation to his father? How does Hamlet relate to his friends? What kind of son is Hamlet compared with Laertes (who also loses a father to murder as well as a sister to madness)? How is Ophelia treated by her father? Do we see themes of betrayal?
- 6. Women Characters.** The big question: What is Ophelia's relation with Hamlet? Are they in love? Are they lovers? How many ways can we interpret the "Nunnery" exchange? What drives her mad? How did the performance interpret Ophelia in relation to the text? How are women portrayed in the work?
- 7. Inaction.** Some have said Hamlet is an interesting character because of how much he DOESN'T do. What causes Hamlet's paralysis? When DOES he act? How does Hamlet's inaction in this

performance compare with more traditional performances of the play?

Questions about the Production

You might be interested in colouring your conversations and lessons with questions about the production and production elements. Examples might be:

1. All of the action in this production takes place in a single room instead of in a number of locations over several countries. Why do you think McLaren made this change and what effect does this have?
2. Where in the world and where in time do you think this room is supposed to be and why?
3. What has happened immediately before the start of the play and how does this affect the first scene?
4. What is the significance of the sound scape? What did the eerie voices mean to you, what do they personify, and how do they affect the mood of the play?
5. Why do you think the costume designer put Hamlet in a Ramones t-shirt and Van shoes? Does he remind you of someone? What age does he look?
6. Horatio is portrayed as a priest in a long black robe. How does this affect your interpretation of him as Hamlet's best friend and confidant?
7. Why do you think he walks with a cane?
8. What did you notice about the lighting?
9. The theatre was arranged in what's called an 'ally-way' configuration. What affect did being able to see the people on the other side of the audience react to the play have on your experience as an audience member?

Activity #2: Analyzing Character through Epitaphs

Estimated Lesson Time

Four 50-minute sessions plus independent work time

Overview

Students compose epitaphs for deceased characters in the *Hamlet*, paying particular attention to how their words appeal to the senses, create imagery, suggest mood, and set tone. Using three-paneled poster board, students design gravestones to display their epitaphs. Students must capture the essence of their characters in their epitaphs, and their poster boards must reflect the themes that support their character's personality and station in life. The resulting projects make compelling hallway displays and provide students with an audience for their writing.

Epitaph:

1. An inscription on a tombstone in memory of the one buried there.
2. A brief literary piece commemorating a deceased person.

From Theory to Practice

In her article on teaching short stories, Diana Mitchell explains the importance of involving students in investigating and exploring texts:

When we teach something, we learn more than the students. We have to think deeply about the material, extract important ideas and concepts, and figure out how to involve students. We look for points of connection, figure how it's related to other things in class and how we can have students respond through writing and talking.

Instead of remaining the chief learner in the classroom, why not let the student be part of this kind of critical thinking and learning? (73)

In order to create meaningful epitaphs for this classroom activity, students tap such critical thinking and learning as they explore their characters deeply. They consider recognize the personality traits of their character and highlight the character's achievements in the world. This opportunity for deep thinking provides students with a summative assessment activity that goes beyond repeating facts and details to deeper engagement with the literary texts that they read.

Further Reading

Mitchell, Diana. "[Using Short Story Collections to Enrich the English Classroom.](#)" *English Journal* 86.8 (December 1997): 73-77.

Student Objectives

Students will

- Identify the main ideas in a text and use them as the basis of interpretation.
- Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of theme, structure, and literary genre.
- Analyze the ways language appeals to the senses, creates imagery, suggests mood, and sets tone.
- Use written language to accomplish their purposes.
- Complete process-based writing, with attention to organization, content, detail, and Standard English conventions.

Teacher's Notes

The complete text of the play is available online in a variety of formats. There are also different versions of the play, based on different compilations of Shakespeare's works. Three versions of the play are the:

- First Quarto (1603)
- Second Quarto (1604)
- First Folio (1623)

For more information on the textual differences between these versions, see [The Relation between the Second Quarto and the Folio Text of Hamlet](#) by Harold Jenkins. Below are notes on three quality versions of the play, followed by a table listing some of the other online editions of Hamlet.

Hamlet 1623 @ University of Pennsylvania

Scanned images from an original printing of Hamlet

The University of Pennsylvania Library's Center for Electronic Text and Image has scanned a 1623 printing of Hamlet from Shakespeare's First Folio. These images are freely available online. The scans are high quality, so a high speed connection is recommended, but it is worth the wait to see the play arranged in antique format with Elizabethan characters. The site contains navigation aids to flip between the pages.

Hamlet from Jeremy Hylton

A clear presentation of the text of Hamlet

The Tech server at Massachusetts Institute of Technology has housed the complete works of Shakespeare online since 1995. Hamlet is available as either divided into different pages by act and scene, or with the entire play on one page. The play is presented in a simple and elegant page design, with black text on a white background. Links on the top of each page provide navigation to move between scenes. To aid understanding, many of the words throughout the play link to a glossary of Shakespearean terms. The site includes other writings by Shakespeare, and also contains many other Shakespeare resources.

Hamlet Classroom Version and Recording by Lynch Multimedia

Prose adaptation in parallel with Hamlet's original text

Lynch Multimedia has produced a unique Shakespeare education resource. A modern translation and retelling of Hamlet is presented side by side with Shakespeare's text. Looking back and forth between different versions of the play offers a fuller understanding of the play while keeping the original work intact. A full audio adaptation recording is also available from the site.

Source	Appearance & Notations
Hamlet @ University of PA	Scanned images of 1623 printing
Hamlet @ MIT	With dictionary links
Hamlet @ Hamlet Homepage	Black text on white background
First Quarto @ University of VA	Line numbers, play on one page
Book Facsimiles @ University of Victoria	Line numbers
First Folio @ University of VA	Line numbers, play on one page
Globe Edition (1866) @ University of VA	Line numbers, play on one page
Hamlet @ Lynch Multimedia	Paraphrased adaptation in parallel

For printed publications of Hamlet, consult your library or bookstore.

© Links to Learning

Harbourfront Centre's WorldStage

URL: <http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/worldstage>

Necessary Angel Theatre Company

URL: <http://www.necessaryangel.com/hamlet>

Harbourfront Centre School Visits

URL: <http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/schoolvisits>

The Complete Works of Shakespeare.

URL: <http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html>

The Cracked Mirror: The Minor Characters

URL: <http://www.bell.k12.ca.us/BellHS/MacTecLab/crackedmirror.html>

Teaching Composition: Lessons and Exercises

this resource contains models of various types of paragraphs, and longer compositions. In addition, it contains exercises and lessons for teacher use.

URL: <http://www.bell.k12.ca.us/BellHS/Departments/English/compmenu.html>

Hamlet Online – Resources for Teachers

URL: <http://www.tk421.net/hamlet/hamlet.html>

Extended Learning

If you or your students are interested in continuing to work with clay and the creation of sculptures, check out the camps, courses, and workshops and family programmes that are offered right here at the Harbourfront centre!

Courses & Workshops:

<http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/courses>

Camps:

<http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/camps>

HarbourKIDS Family Programming:

<http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/harbourkids>