

Global Literature

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01/04/2023

Shakespeare: Hamlet

Acts 1-2

Shakespeare's Hamlet is a tragic play that centres around the young Prince of Denmark, Hamlet, who is grieving the death of his father, King Hamlet. Hamlet's uncle, Claudius, has taken the throne and married his mother, Gertrude. Hamlet is deeply upset by this and becomes increasingly suspicious of Claudius' role in his father's death.

In Act 1, Hamlet is visited by the ghost of his father who reveals that he was murdered by Claudius. Hamlet decides to feign madness in order to investigate the matter further. He becomes increasingly erratic in his behaviour, causing concern among his friends and family. Meanwhile, Polonius, a counsellor to King Claudius, sends his daughter, Ophelia, to speak with Hamlet, but their conversation only adds to his madness.

In Act 2, Hamlet's friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive at court, and King Claudius asks them to spy on Hamlet. Hamlet continues to behave erratically, and his friends and family struggle to understand his motives. Polonius arranges for a group of actors to perform a play in which a king is murdered by his brother, hoping to trigger a confession from Hamlet. However, Hamlet sees through the plot and delivers a famous soliloquy in which he reflects on the nature of life and death.

Overall, Acts 1 and 2 of Hamlet set the stage for the play's central conflict and introduce the major characters. Hamlet's struggle to uncover the truth about his father's death and his own madness form the backbone of the play, while the relationships between Hamlet, Ophelia, and Polonius add depth and complexity to the plot.

