

Jerry Springer Meets Hamlet Handout 1
"Men Who Kill Their Brothers and Marry Their
Sister-In-Laws And The Nephews Who Want To Kill Them"

Introduction (Aw, look at the tiny print... it's so cute!)

We've all seen the sleazy talk shows on TV before right? (Well ok, then at least I admit to have watched them before - but not anymore!) Jerry Springer, Maury, Montel Williams, Ricki Lake - they're all stalemates of our daily TV lineup. The one constant among all of these shows is that the topics are often off the wall and all the characters want to do is talk about themselves and their crazy lives.

Although the characters in Hamlet are much deeper and much more complex than that of the types usually seen on talk shows, the plot of Hamlet on its most basic level does fall in line with that of the typical talk show. "Men who kill their brothers and marry their sister-in-laws and the nephews who want to kill them." It fits perfectly. What we're going to do with this activity is create our own talk show in the classroom, but instead of using the typical crazy talk show guest we're going to act out the parts ourselves as characters from Hamlet.

Yeah, right on, a talk show! What's the Assignment?

Glad you asked. For this assignment you are going to be asked to test the limits of your ability to really dive into the play of Hamlet and examine it. You are going to take on the persona of **one** of Shakespeare's characters in the play Hamlet. You are going to learn every detail you can about the character; what they've done, what they've said, who they talked to, why they are the way they are, personality traits etc. but most importantly you are going to figure out what they **would** do in a given **new** situation. This requires your inference skills as well as your literary analysis skills.

So, what exactly is expected of me?

- Examine the play of Hamlet to determine how to shape the character you yourself (or your group) are going to become.
- Answer questions on a talk show with me as the host. You will be expected to answer these questions **not** in the way that **you** would answer them, but in the way that your **character** would.
- You can also ask other characters questions, you can comment on what they say and you can try to script out events with other characters in the talk show to happen as you want them to, just as long as you keep it in conjunction with what your characters would actually do. (that means no throwing chairs, swearing or flashing as guests often do in the real thing)

So what's next? The Breakdown:

Ok, ok, don't be so anxious. We'll get to the working part soon enough. These are the eight characters (7 groups) that will be participating in this mock talk show. You will be placed into groups in correspondence to the characters:

Hamlet	Ophelia	Gertrude
Rosencrantz	Laertes	Claudius
Guildenstern	Polonius	

- Once you receive the character that you are going to be, you and your group members will be responsible for ensuring that the actor who plays that character has the right costume elements, knows the right lines and is sure of how your character would act in a given situation (yes, even groups with different characters are responsible for helping each other, I encourage it!). Use the handout provided to help guide you in making sure that you cover all the bases of your character.

- You will also be provided ahead of time with the questions I will be asking in the mock talk show and you will be given the chance to make your own questions so that there will be no surprises and you can prepare your responses ahead of time. (Nice guy, eh?)

- Since this is a partner project, I will also allow you to "tag" out with your partner if you're struggling with a question. (Double nice!)

- On the day of the event, we will play this out as if it is a real talk show and Hamlet is a guy who has come onto the show with his family because they have real problems (Probably about as dysfunctional as you can get...). I will be the host and will ask the questions. Your job is to answer the questions as candidly as you can, staying in character as closely as you can the entire time.

What if I don't have a group? Does that mean I'm free?

-Ah wouldn't it be great if that were the case, but sadly, no. For those of you who don't have a character that you're responsible for, you actually have multiple jobs. You are responsible for all of the following:

- Coming up with atmosphere elements for our talk show. (eg. "applause" or "boo" signs, a microphone for the handsome host, a sign for the show with the show title, props for the guests like swords, etc.)

- Coming up with questions to ask the guests as audience members. You will be first in line to ask questions to the guests so your questions will have to be right on target.

- Optional: Come up with a Hamlet themed commercial. It could be on a product that a character could have used in the play, it could be on a service that a character needed in the play, it could be on a future show involving the characters; anything Hamlet related will work.

How Can I Score Mad Props?? (Or "big points" for all you non-hip folks)

- You will be graded directly on the package presentation of your character. If your answers to the questions fall right in line with exactly the way the real character would answer those questions you will score high. If I believe you are who you say you are, you can't lose. You will also be graded on the completion of the handout and the quality of answers you give to those questions.

-Aside from that, anything that can help add to the authenticity of the activity will help you earn the blowout scores. You will be given important bonus points for using key lines from the poem in your acting. But it has to be authentic. If I asked you as Hamlet "What time is it?" and you answered with "Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I..." that wouldn't serve the purpose; however, if I asked you as Hamlet if you've ever contemplated suicide, it would work to say "To be or not to be..." and go on a long spiel. Other ways to score big are to bring actual props to the day itself. If you have costumes that you can bring, signs you want to make, ways to decorate the classroom, a microphone for the handsome host, etc. Lastly, use your fellow classmates. You are encouraged to script out your own interchanges and your own events. If you want to have an argument between Hamlet and Ophelia or end the show with a sword fight between Laertes and Hamlet, go for it.

****Remember** This mock talk show will only be as good or as bad as you guys make it!**