

### I. An inner ghost?

In a production at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 1980, the actor Jonathan Pryce played Hamlet, with the Ghost appearing to speak from inside him. At times he was bent double with the pain of the Ghost's voice coming through him; at other times the Ghost appeared to speak in a horrible voice cutting through Hamlet's own voice, bubbling up in an uncontrolled fashion. Discuss the following points:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of having the Ghost come from within a character?
- How could this first scene be presented if the Ghost is an internal rather than an external presence?
- What does an inner Ghost imply about the nature of ghosts, and the purpose of this particular Ghost in the play as a whole?

### II. Horatio's response to the Ghost

- a. Look back at Horatio's lines in Act 1 Scene 1. Make a list of the range of emotions and characteristics he displays thus far in the text.
- b. Try reading out like 112-125 and lines 126-139 (1.1), experiment with different styles of delivery. The two sections are clearly different, but in how many ways could you present each of the sections? Which combination works best?
- c. Stage an interview with Horatio, questioning him about his different reactions to the Ghost. Questions could include: what was your first reaction to hearing the reports of Marcellus and Barnardo?
- d. What have you learned about Horatio's character from looking back at these lines/scene?

### III. Claudius: honest of devious?

King Hamlet recently died. Claudius, his brother, became King of Denmark and married Gertrude. Claudius now possesses his dead brother's throne and widow. He explains his marriage to his sister-in-law so soon after her first husband's death (1.2.1-16), and then turns to political affairs (1.2.17-39).

- **Honest of devious?** Some critics argue Claudius's eloquence is appropriate to the occasion. His long, carefully constructed sentences suggest he is self-assured and honest. But other critics argue the speech reveals his insincerity. Its fluency makes it sound rehearsed and false. His constant references to himself using the royal 'we', 'us', 'our' suggest he is anxious about whether his kingship is legal. Speak the lines 1.2.1-39 to show Claudius as, alternately: confident and in control, uneasy and insecure, devious and crafty, honest and sincere.
- What does Claudius' language reveal about his character?
- Collect what you see as key lines in Claudius' speech. Annotate each quote with comments about Claudius' character. You can gauge his character through his actions, his words, and his manner of speaking.

### IV. Hamlet: the listener

You will discover everything Hamlet says throughout the play reveals his acute alertness to language. He listens carefully to everything said to him, and often plays or **puns** on the words he heard, giving them different meaning and significance.

Hamlet immediately picks up the implications of Claudius' use of 'cousin' and 'son'. He detests the close kinship Claudius' marriage to his mother created. His first line puns on 'kin' and 'kind', saying in effect he feels too closely related, and does not have the same nature as his new stepfather. His second line plays on 'sun' and 'son', again rejecting any close relationship to Claudius.

- For line 1.2.65: is Hamlet speaking to himself? To the audience? In a sardonic tone, or bitterly? Or some other way? The line is an **aside**, not heard by other characters. Also how would line 67 be spoken? Which words might Hamlet emphasize to question his kinship to Claudius, for example?
- Read aloud the scene between Hamlet and Claudius/Gertrude in Act 1 Scene 2. What emphasis and intonation should be given to which key words in order to show characterization?
- What do we learn about these characters: their intentions, their motivations, and their allegiances?