***Hamlet* Act III**

Act III **ALWAYS** contains the climax (the most suspenseful/exciting part of the play where the issues and problems introduced in I & II come to a high point of excitement/suspense). The climax will be the turning point in the action. It will be the point where things start to deteriorate for the hero. Tragic flaws become readily apparent

* Issues
  + Hamlet’s madness
  + Polonius’ plotting
  + Hamlet and Ophelia’s relationship
  + Hamlet dealing with Claudius

III.i

* Nunnery Scene
* Takes place within Elsinore
* R&G are reporting their findings on H’s behaviour to the King
* C starts scene shows management of conversation but note**\*\*\* everyone believes H is mad except C and he is the only person H wants to fool\*\*\*** (l.1-4)
* R says H feels “distracted and won’t speak of the cause” (l.5-6)
* P adds that H wants C to watch the upcoming play (happening tonight)
* C agrees to watch (remember the play is H’s entrapment plan for C)
* C asks G to leave so P can put the entrapment plan into action (spying of O and H)
  + **The plan**
  + Gertrude obeys
* P tells O to act like she’s reading a book to pass the time
* C’s aside – the 1st indication that his outwardly calm behaviour is concealing a tortured conscience. Indicates he is really guilty of something. (Does this change the way you think of him?)
* “Harlot’s cheek….” No matter how you try to hide something ugly/sinful (e.g. a prostitute’s makeup) it doesn’t cover up the true ugliness of what the truth is (no matter how he tries to cover up his sin of murder…. He is still guilty
* “O heavy burden” – the deed is a heavy burden on his mind and conscience
* P and C go to hide behind curtain to listen to O & H

**NOTE HAMLET’S CONDITION**

* Hamlet’s 3rd Soliloquy – probably the most famous soliloquy (l.63-95) - This is Hamlet’s lowest point
* “To be or not to be…tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortunes.” (l.63-65) H is still considering suicide (to live or not to live)
* Reflects on suicide as a means of escape from life’s problems. Is it more noble to live with all these terrible things in life or take one’s life?
* Should I respond passively to the trials and tribulations of life or act on it and confront the problems or commit suicide
* “Fortune” – fortune/fate wages war on humans
* Note all the references that link sleep to death
* “Whips and scorns” – harsh language - harsh life experiences
* Either you have to face problems (and take what you get) or do yourself in (because you are afraid of what you don’t know)
* The problem with suicide is man’s fear of oblivion (the fear of the unknown after death keeps us living; we don’t know how to handle things we don’t know about) \*\*\*Fear of Death\*\*\*
* Contemplates that suicide is the easy answer to all life’s conflict (Act I)
* Man of rationale take action and are determined to carry out a plan to expose his uncle (Act II) is now the procrastinating Prince (Act III)
* Notices O there and snaps out of the soliloquy (start of nunnery scene) (l.96-98)
* returns some of the gifts he gave her (l.102-104 & 107-112)
* H denies giving them to her
* \*\*\*H caught in a monumental conflict and struggles for a satisfying solution
* He gets very angry at O
* In his bitterness we see him lash out at O when he denies he ever loved her
* Here we see H & O’s past relationship = how can we tell that she loved him? (double meaning of words and expression of feelings about one another)
* H asks her three things

1) are you modest?

2) are you chaste?

3) have you integrity?

* H questions her honesty and fairness then contradicts himself by saying “I did love you once”. Then he says “I loved you not” (l.129)
* “Get thee to a nunnery….” Speech (l.131 – 140)
* Nunnery – pun (two meanings 1-convent 2-brothel)
* Go to a nunnery (no relationship/contact with men) because men cannot be trusted (secretly trying to protect her from men/relationships/hurt) OR go to a brothel because she has been used so much
* Asks where P is (O replies at home. H says home is the best place for a fool) (l.140-1)
* O is quite distraught but H continues his verbal abuse of marriage and womanhood – rant of how he hates marriage (Gertrude) (l.154- 161)
* L.162 – 173 Important speech - O is convinced that H is mad “O what a noble mind is here O’erthrown”
* Declares her deepest sorrow over H’s apparent breakdown
* Remembers the H that she fell in love with
* Reminds audience H was once happy, a good person and loving
* \*\*\*contrast\*\*\*there was once normalcy in this kingdom
* P and C discuss what they have heard
* C says the symptoms of lovesickness don’t fit – says H doesn’t sound like a man in love, more like one suffering from an affliction of the soul (l. 174 – 179)
* C’s plan for H (l. 181-182)
* C will send H to England\*\*\*C feels threatened\*\*\*
* His behaviour is a problem therefore he needs to go to England (a country whose ruler owes Denmark)
* P still thinks H is suffering from love-sickness
* Has new plan to force H’s real problem into the open and if it fails H will be sent to England (new entrapment/spy plan)
* Suggests that C let G discuss firmly with her son the melancholy that he’s expressing while P listens from a hiding place (if she can’t get answers H goes to England – C wants to get rid of him, P wants prove O is the reason for H’s maddness)
* “It shall be so;/madness if great ones must not unwatch’d go” we need to pay great attention to H\*\*\*C not fooled, feels threatened, cautious\*\*\*

III.ii

* H has a multitude of emotions this scene – begins rational & intelligent, then gets more and more excited as scene progresses, then at the end he’s murderously angry
* **“The Mousetrap”** scene
* Start of scene: H is giving the actors advice of how to introduce the injected lines of the play (this part of the scene is meant to relax the tension from the last scene and before the tension erupts in this one)
* H confides in Horatio - he shares the details of the play with Hor
* Ask Hor to observe the King’s reaction to the one particular speech (H realizes that he himself cannot be impartial)
* If C does not act guilt H says they have seen a demon/devil ghost and H will accept the outcome (l. 81-85)
* This all reinforces the idea that Hor is greatly trusted and admired as a person

**Foil Characters** - - contrasting characters (contrasting does not mean conflicting!)

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Hamlet** | **Horatio** | **Both** |
| Controlled by emotions | Not controlled by emotions | Similar in age, social status, friends, university students at Wittenburg |
| Volitile (bi-polar) | Even temperment |
|  | calm |

* l.92 – “I must be idle” – I must play the fool = resume the antic disposition
* Everyone enters = excitement (adds to the importance that we see C admit guilt here in front of everyone)
* MANY sexual comments exchanged between O and H in this scene (H making crude and bawdy comments to O) (lie in your lap, country matters, a metal more attractive, be not ashamed to show)
* l.103-104 – P saying he played Caesar - - \*\*foreshadowing\*\*
* Dumb show – a pantomime preview of the action of the play that will follow (no confirmation/unsure if C actually sees this as he has no reaction to it)
* The players (King and Queen actors) admittance to love serves to prime the pump of C’s guilt
* The Queen goes on and on about how much she loves her husband, how nothing could change it, if anything happened to him she would never marry again as it would be like “killing him twice” if he looked down from heaven to see her with another man. King says those feelings will change once it happens, yet she continues to deny she could even love another (serves to be a jab at Gertrude)
* H asks G “madam, how like you this play” G replies “The lady protests too much, methinks” (means she declares her emotions too strongly (this seems to show some of her innocence coming through that she doesn’t make the connection)
* l.234 “The Mousetrap” What H tells C is the name of the play – pun on “trap” – those of us who are innocent are not affected by the play – only guilty suffer (strong possibility at this point that C has realized H knows that C committed murder/is guilty)

**CLIMAX (ALWAYS IS IN ACT III. ii IN MOST SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYS)**

* Player pours poison in King’s ear, Claudius rises and leaves (reacts with alarm and panics)

= This is enough proof for H

* H is ecstatic with the effect of his play and declares how he believes the Ghost’s story (so does Horatio)
* Hor confirms that C reacted as if he was guilty of a great sin
* Trouble: now C knows that H is clearly his adversary and poses a threat to his(c’s) security as King of Denmark and as G’s husband
* Guildenstern and Rosencrantz are sent by Gertrude to tell H that the King is very upset, is indisposed and that she wants to speak with H immediately
* H makes fun of Guildenstern by not answering questions directly
* Metaphor of the recorder (flute)
* H keeps asking Guild. To play the recorder
* Then he confronts him saying that if you don’t know how to play/if you don’t have all the information about a situation, then it is best to stay out of others business (drop trying to get information out of H for C)
* H is upset the R &G are trying to “play” him like an instrument (fret upon me = pun on fret)
* P enters and says that Gert wants to see H immediately
* H puts on the antic disposition again and speaks in riddles
* Continues to mock and make P out to be an idiot
* Remember P’s next trap is to listen in on a meeting between H and Gert.
* Hamlet Soliloquy
* “Witching time of night” = evil time = opens with murderous and reveals blood thirsty thoughts
* H restrains his anger because he doesn’t want to inflict physical harm on his mother when he meets with her = = he promised the ghost, but he still wants revenge on her for causing such pain (even though he feels like hurting her…. he won’t)
* “I will speak daggers to her, but use none” I will go and let her have it (c is a murderer, her marriage is incestuous and he has proof) he will be harsh with words but not physically

III.iii

* Prayer scene
* C – is the threatened antagonist
* C says that since H’s madness has become a threat he must be taken to England ASAP
* This is his plan to get rid of H
* Ros & Guild agree to escort him to England
* Remember those two are doing this out of friendship (C is doing it out of personal gain)
* P tells C that H is off to Gert’s room
* P will hide behind the arras in the room and overhear their conversation
* Claudius’s soliloquy
* Curses his murderous deed
* Admits that murder was his biggest mistake and is tormented by a guilty conscience
* Wonders if he will ever be forgiven for the horrendous crime
* He’s remorseful but not ready to give up what he has gained (he gained: the throne, power and Gertrude) to redeem himself
* He is not asking to repent therefore he will never be forgiven
* He wonders what hope he has of being forgiven
* Hopes that prayer will help
* He was motivated by intense ambition and now he’s committed a mortal sin that will continue to torment his soul and influence his actions
* H enters C’s room with sword drawn
* H wants to murder C but does not because he thinks C is praying
* Dramatic Irony - - we know that C cannot pray/repent
* H declares C should die in a state where he has/is sinning (sins on his soul) just as his father did
* H says hell will be the destination of C’s soul (so he will wait to kill him until the time is right)
* Just as H leaves to see Gert. C says his words go to heaven but his thoughts will never be sent/reach heaven (because he is not sorry)

\*\*\***this was H’s chance to kill C and get revenge**

\*\*\***H’s decision to delay the murder is an example of procrastination that has been his downfall**

III.iv

* Bedroom scene
* H still behaves in same ugly and angry moods as he previous scenes as me makes his way to Gertrude’s room
* His anger rapidly reaches full throttle in action that witnesses his passion overcoming his reason
* P instructs G to be firm with the Prince (P hides behind the curtain)
* H charges in angrily
* G & H’s argument:
* H talking about his father
* G is talking about C
* G starts to chastise her son
* H replies harshly (he says he wishes she wasn’t his mother – she doesn’t want to listen and he makes her sit in from of a mirror to see herself) and (she thinks he’s going to hurt her) she cries for help
* P (from behind the curtain) echoes G’s cries and H draws his sword and stabs it into the curtain
* H kills P (we feel a little sorry for P because his excessive ambition – and some stupidity - to help C was his demise)
* H didn’t know it was P behind the curtain
* “A bloody deed; almost as bad, good mother, As a king, and marry with his brother” – H implies that G knew about King H’s murder (H originally thought he had stabbed C behind the curtain)
* G is shocked at this accusation that C murdered King H
* H says P was a busy body
* H’s speech is not a dignified eulogy for the Lord Chamberlain of Denmark
* G asks H why he’s so nasty to her and he replies that it is her marriage to C that upsets him so much (H says he wonders how she could have married such a man)
* H accuses G of lusting and being weak
* H gives 2 contrasting views of G’s husbands
  + King H was warm and loving
  + C whom belittles people
* G asks H to “speak no more…” words. This shows her remorse and she breaks down and cried (begs him to stop as she is pained by his words)
* H continues to give a vile description of C (says C stole the crown)
* Ghost enters (appears for the last time and only H can see it) (G does not see the ghost and shows she is innocent of the King’s death - - She is guilty of lustful passion and poor judgement
* \*\*\*\*G thinks H is truly mad as he speaks to the Ghost (because she can’t see the Ghost – Ghosts can’t be seen by guilty people)
* Ghost reminds H of his promise to spare G and prompts H to help G in her dilemma
* H is frustrated that G can’t see the Ghost
* G says that what H thinks he saw was a hallucination (“This very coinage of your brain…”)
* H denies that he is mad (first time he’s admitted that to G) and wants G to repent her guilty behaviour
* H expresses his regret at P’s death and bids G a good night
* “I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so, to punish me with this….” \*\*\*foreshadowing - -makes us wonder what the consequences of P’s death
* “I must be cruel, only to be kind” Paradox (H’s final words to G, which make us wonder what other characters are in for a surprise (maybe Ros and Guild???)
* H tells G that he is “mad in craft” - - that he has created this madness
* H makes her promise to keep this ALL a secret
* H tells G that he is being sent to England with Ros and Guild whom he distrusts
* He says that he fears the sealed letters are meant to seal his own fate, but he will out wit them all
* H removes/drags out P’s body to another room quietly