



Act II

Scene 1- Polonius Sends Reynaldo

Summary: Polonius sends his servant Reynaldo to Paris to secretly check on his son Laertes. He tells him to find out what Laertes is doing by asking questions and even spreading small lies. This shows that Polonius likes to spy and control others. Later, Ophelia comes very upset and says that Hamlet came to her looking wild, messy, and strange. Polonius thinks that Hamlet is acting crazy because he is in love with Ophelia.

Key Quote: “Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth.” – Polonius

Meaning: Polonius believes that telling small lies can help reveal the truth.

Significance: This scene shows the themes of spying. It tells us that Polonius likes to watch and control people, even his own children. It also shows Ophelia’s innocence and how others use her to find out about Hamlet.

Scene 2- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern / The Players



Summary: King Claudius and Queen Gertrude ask Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet’s old friends, to watch Hamlet and find out why he is acting strangely. Polonius tells them he thinks Hamlet is mad because Ophelia rejected him. When Polonius talks to Hamlet, Hamlet mocks him and speaks in riddles. Later, a group of actors (players) arrive at the castle, inspiring Hamlet’s idea for **“The Mousetrap”** or **the play within the play**. Hamlet welcomes them and asks them to perform a play that includes a scene similar to his father’s murder. He wants to watch Claudius’s reaction to see if he looks guilty.

Key Quote: “The play’s the thing / Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.”
– Hamlet

Meaning: Hamlet plans to use the play to test Claudius's conscience and prove if he is guilty.

Significance: This scene introduces Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who pretend to be Hamlet's friends but are really spies for the king. Hamlet's idea to use the play shows his cleverness and his belief that appearances can reveal the truth. This is an important turning point where Hamlet moves from sadness to taking action.



Important Speeches – Speaker and Addressee

1. "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

- **Speaker:** Hamlet
- **Addressee:** Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
- Act II, Scene 2
- **Analysis:** Hamlet says life depends on perspective. It shows his cleverness but also his sadness. This line is important because it reveals Hamlet's way of questioning truth and reality.

2. "What a piece of work is man!"

- **Speaker:** Hamlet
- **Addressee:** Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
- Act II, Scene 2
- **Analysis:** Hamlet praises mankind's greatness but then calls humans worthless to him. It shows his deep depression and loss of hope. It reflects Hamlet's anger at human weakness and dishonesty.

3. “The play’s the thing / Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.”

- **Speaker:** Hamlet
- **Addressee:** Himself (soliloquy)
- Act II, Scene 2
- **Analysis:** Hamlet decides to test Claudius with a play. This shows his intelligence. Instead of acting blindly, Hamlet seeks proof.



Major Themes in Act 2



1. Madness (Real or Pretended)

Analysis: Hamlet starts to act mad on purpose to trick the people around him. No one can tell if he is really crazy or just pretending. His strange behaviour makes Claudius and Polonius worried and confused.

Importance: This theme is important because it shows how hard it is to know what is real or fake. It also makes Hamlet more mysterious and keeps the audience interested.



2. Words vs. Actions

Analysis: Hamlet talks a lot and uses clever words, but he does not act quickly. He thinks deeply and gives long speeches, yet he keeps delaying what he needs to do.

Importance: This theme shows how hard it can be to turn thoughts into real action. It builds suspense because the audience keeps waiting for Hamlet to finally do something.