Third **Year**

**Hamlet's Play**

**Main characters: Hamlet, King Claudius (Hamlet's uncle) Queen Gertrude (Hamlet's mother) Polonius (Prime-minister) Ophelia and Laertes (Polonius' daughter and son).**

**Origins of his Madness**

**In the famous opening act of the play, a group of soldiers on guard duty gather outside Elsinore Castle at night and discuss the fact that they have marked a strange figure wandering around the castle. He resembles King Hamlet. From the very beginning, Shakespeare Horatio, Hamlet dearest friend fears Hamlet’s fragile state of mind and effectively foretells Hamlet’s descent into insanity.**

**He repeatedly urges him not to approach the spooky figure by himself, as it might adopt a hideous (ugly), menacing form quite possibly the Devil’s shape. Hamlet feels deeply melancholic due to the sudden passing of his dear father and his mother’s unexpected marriage to his uncle, but yet, his wits remain completely unaltered despite these tragic, unfortunate events.**

**Hamlet first expresses his deep sorrow for the events taking place in the castle, but most importantly, because he introduces the idea of faking truth and role-playing. Hamlet, then, makes the strange decision to assume the role of the madman. He chooses using insanity as a disguise to justify his actions and conceal both his identity and his intentions.**

**Madness gives Hamlet the quality of being ambiguous; he is able to speak and perform without any restrictions.Hamlet’s insanity is not only a threat to the Danish court, but it is also a threat to himself. As it will be argued in chapter 3, Hamlet’s brilliance seems to vanish eventually as he carries on playing his game of madness.**

**Hence, from the ghost scene, insanity becomes Hamlet’s only medium of communication, except for his moments of solitude. So, by paying attention to his brief periods of alienation when alone, Hamlet takes off the mask of madness and starts thinking about his true concerns, that is, the role he must fulfill, meaning the revenge.**

**In this soliloquy, he expresses his deep self-hatred because of his inability to carry out the revenge plot encouraged by the figure of his late father. Furthermore, he intends to recreate his father’s murder scene in a play in order to observe the King’s reaction to it and then decide whether he is free of guilt or not. Hamlet decides to use insanity in order to conceal both his identity and his future intentions**

**Ironically, Polonius predicts in act II that Hamlet’s fragile state of mind.**