

# Act 2 Scene 2

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# Summary:

- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:
  - Hamlet's 2 best friends come to the castle after Claudius' "hasty" request (2.2.4).
  - Claudius informs them of Hamlet's broody behaviour and asks them to spend time with him to spy on his behaviour.
  - They obey and say they give their services in "the full bent" (2.2.30).
- "hasty"
- "the full bent"

# Summary:

- Polonius' hint:
  - Polonius enters to announce the arrival of Norwegian ambassadors.
  - He tells Claudius that he might have found the reason to Hamlet's distemper.
  - Claudius eagerly wants to know, but Polonius holds the information off to be the “fruit” to the great feast (2.2.53).
- “fruit”

# Summary:

- The state of Norway:
  - Voltimand (the Norwegian ambassador) enters to deliver news about Norway.
  - The King of Norway has stopped his nephew Fortinbras' war preparations.
  - Fortinbras swore to never threaten Denmark again which pleased his uncle.
  - He was rewarded 3 thousand crowns and permission to lead the soldiers to attack Poland
  - They will pass peacefully through Denmark

# Summary:

- Polonius' reveal
  - Polonius returns to tell Claudius about Hamlet's source of madness.
  - He shows him a confiscated love letter from Hamlet to Ophelia which showed the desperation of Hamlet's love.
  - He concludes that Ophelia obeyed his orders and rejected Hamlet, causing his mad and sulky behaviour.
  - Polonius is so confident that he is willing to be beheaded if he is wrong.

# Summary:

- Claudius, Gertrude, and Polonius' plan:
  - In order to confirm their theory about Hamlet's broken heart, they devise a plan.
  - Polonius will “loose [his] daughter” to walk with Hamlet in the lobby
  - Meanwhile, Claudius and Polonius will hide behind a pillar to listen in to their conversation.
  - As they finish their plan, Hamlet walks in.
- “loose [his] daughter”\*

# Characterization

Queen:

2 Different characteristics:

- Loves Hamlet

"o'erhasty marriage"

- Politically intelligent

“I am two men there are not living / To whom he more adheres.”

“Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz”

*In this example of characterization, Shakespeare has the audience experience the same uncertainty about the queen that Hamlet feels. The audience can infer that the queen loves Hamlet because her feelings for him make her question her marriage to Claudius. However, her politically intelligent and somewhat manipulative characteristics have the audience wondering if her duty to the state and to herself take precedence over her loyalties to her son.*

# Characterisation (cont.)

King

- Duplicitous

“To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather, / so much as from occasion you may  
gleam, / Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus”

- Flatterer

“Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern”

In this example, dramatic irony allows the reader to recognize Claudius’s manipulative nature in this quote. Also, the fact that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern put their duty to the king before their loyalties to Hamlet is significant and connects with our guiding question: Is this play exploring the pressures that society places on individuals? What happens when the collective identity trumps individual identity?



# Characteriser (cont)

Hamlet vs Polonius:

“To the celestial, and my soul’s idol, the most beautified Ophelia”

“That’s an ill phrase, a vile phrase; “beautified” is a vile phrase”

Hamlet’s letter to Ophelia:

“Doubt truth to be a liar/But never doubt I love”(2.2.117-118).

If Hamlet is to be trusted, then this letter reveals that his loyalties toward Ophelia should never be doubted. He also reveals his uncertainties about the world that “truth” no longer exists in his world, but that his love is the one thing that remains consistent. Does Ophelia's lack of loyalty to him push him over the edge or is it his uncertainty about humanity that causes him to doubt his identity?

# Characteriser (cont)

Guildenstern and Rosencrantz - Easily Flattered

“Heavens make our presence and our practises / Pleasant and helpful to him!”

“I am two men there are not living / To whom he more adheres.”

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- Loyal to the king: They obey and say they give their services in “the full bent” (2.2.30).
- This proves their loyalty to the king and state takes precedence over their loyalty to Hamlet even though they’ve been friends since they were young: “That, being of so young days brought up with him/And sith so neighbour’d to his youth and haviour”

# Characteriser (cont)

Ophelia

- No agency (she must obey her father so her loyalty to her father must take precedence over her personal loyalties and her love for Hamlet).

“I have a daughter, have while she is mine,-- / Who in her duty and obedience, mark, / Hath given me this: now gather, and surmise”

# Style

Metaphor - “As fits a King’s remembrance” (2.2.26).

King Claudius is telling his guests Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that **if they successfully find out the meaning behind Hamlet’s madness, they will be thanked like a King.** A comparison without using “like” or “as” is being made as he compares how they will be treated later on, to how a King is treated, signifying they will be attended to very graciously, as Kings do.

**The fact that this flattery encourages Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to put the king before Hamlet, proves that they prioritize their collective identity.**

# Style

Amplification - “I will be brief: your noble son is mad. Mad call I it, for, to define true madness” (2.2.95).

The words “mad” and “madness” are being repeated in successive phrases to add effect.

They are labelling Hamlet as was his plan after seeing the ghost. Will this labelling turn into a reality though? Is this play exploring the impact of “illness identity”? When one is identified as being melancholic, for example, does this become a self fulfilling prophecy?

# Style

Climatic Word Order - “And he repulsed, a short tale to make, fell into sadness, then into fast, thence to watch, thence into a weakness, thence into lightness, and by the lightness, and by this declension into the madness whereon now he raves and we all mourn for” (2.2.144-149).

As Polonius is explaining Hamlet’s state in front of Ophelia, he amplifies the effects of their separation by stating the least impactful effect, being him not eating, and heightening to the last and most important effect, being him having lost his mind. The audience is left uncertain about appearances vs reality: is Hamlet truly mad or is this an act? Why would he perform as such in front of Ophelia? Is it because he knows Polonius and the king will find out because he recognizes or loyalty to her father OR has her loyalties to her father driven him to madness? Form follows function here. The text is littered with uncertainties so the audience experiences the motif along with the protagonist. What lesson is to be learned from this?

# Connector

“And here give up ourselves, in the full bent, To lay our service freely at your feet To be commanded.”

In this passage Guildenstern talks about how they will give themselves up for the king and to lay their service freely at his feet. The idea of “giving themselves up” relates to “The Book of Mormon” where the king had full control of his servants even if Leontie came down with his army they would stand by the king. This connection invites the reader to recognize the dangers in prioritizing collective identity.

“(Points at head and shoulders)

“Take this from this if this be otherwise. If circumstances lead me, I will find Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed Within the center.

In this passage Polonius shows loyalty to the king and a very confident side of him as he says they can chop his head off if he isn't right about his daughter and Hamlet and what led hamlet to his craziness. This loyalty is familiar to the Elizabethan audience who recognizes that being disloyal to the state could cost a person his/her life. Understanding this connection may invite the reader to wonder if Shakespeare is challenging the concept of collective vs personal loyalty with his constant images that invite the reader to see the corruption that results from such loyalty.