

Act 1 Scene 2:

Summarizer: Avery Pollock

After the previous day, in which the guardsmen and Horatio continuously see the ghost, King Claudius begins his speech to discuss the business of moving forward. In this speech, Claudius states that he still mourns the death of his brother-in-law, the elder Hamlet, but he believes that life still goes on as he states that “[t]o be contracted in one brow of woe, yet so far hath discretion fought with nature” (1.2.4-5). Therefore, he wishes to celebrate his recent marriage to Gertrude, his former sister-in-law. In his speech, he then speaks about how Fortinbras is demanding that Claudius give up his territory that his father lost to the elder Hamlet. He states that he has written a letter to Fortinbras uncle, who is the head of Norway, and sends Cornelius and Voltmand to get the letter to him.

After the speech is finished, Laertes tells Claudius that he wishes for his permission to go back to France “[f]rom whence though willingly [he] came to Denmark/To show [his] duty in [Claudius’] coronation” (1.2.53-54). Polonius, his father/the Lord Chamberlain, gives Laertes permission to return and Claudius then agrees as well.

Claudius begins to speak to Prince Hamlet wondering why he still continues to mourn the death of his father. Gertrude tells him he must stop wearing the “nighted color” (1.2.68). But Hamlet disagrees as he says, “‘Seems,’ madam? Nay, it is. I know not ‘seems’” (1.2.76). Hamlet says he has more grief in him that one can see from his appearance. Claudius tries to console Hamlet to come across as fatherly as he says that all fathers must die one day and reminds him that he is next in line as King and to think of him, Claudius, as his father. Claudius tells Hamlet that he does not want him to go back to school at Wittenberg as he would rather Hamlet stay with him to keep him company. Gertrude agrees that he should not go back to Wittenberg. Hamlet decides to obey them and not go back. Claudius is so happy by this that he celebrates with drinks.

When Hamlet is alone, he states how much he wishes he could die. He wishes God had not made suicide a sin. He is disappointed that just two months after his father’s death, Gertrude remarried. He believes his father was a good King and treated Gertrude right.

Horatio, Bernardo and Marcellus enter where Hamlet and Horatio begin speaking. He asks Horatio why he is not at school at Wittenberg and rather traveling to Denmark. Horatio says that he came for elder Hamlet’s funeral but Hamlet knows that he came for the wedding.

Horatio, Bernardo and Marcellus reveal to Hamlet that they have seen his father’s ghost. Hamlet says to keep this a secret and he will come see the guardsmen that night to try speaking to the ghost.

Characterization: Nick Lalonde

Hamlet -

- Depressed due to his father's death (what elements of characterization reveal this? Why is this significant?)
- Shocked due to his uncle and his mother getting married (why is this significant?)
- suspicions - He was suspicious about the ghost that Horatio and the guards claimed to have seen (Proof needed + why is this significant?)

Style: Katy Moore

Puns:

“A little more than kin, a little less than kind.” - 65

- Hamlet puns on the similarity between the words “kin” and “kind”. It tells us both that he dislikes his Uncle (specifically because he thinks that the King is cold-hearted), and that he is intelligent and witty; he likes to show off how smart he is.
- “More than kin” refers to the fact that he is both an uncle and a step father and “less than kind” hints at Hamlet’s suspicions that this hasty marriage seems immoral or “unkind”.

“How is it that the clouds still hang on you?”

“Not so, my lord; I am too much i’ the sun.” - 66-67

- In this exchange Hamlet uses both verbal irony (saying that he isn’t sad about his father’s death, when he’s obviously still in mourning) and a pun to let the audience know that he disagrees with Uncle’s belief that he should already be recovered from his death. This is obviously verbal irony as he spends the entire conversation being bitter and sarcastic, and the pun comes from the use of “sun” (which can also be seen as “son”). He is reminding his uncle of his father, in the same line that he’s claiming to be all better.

Alliteration:

“Our sometime sister, now our queen,” - Line 8

- The alliteration in this line is used to put emphasis on the fact that before they were married, the King and Queen were legally brother and sister in law. This might have been considered incest at the time, and by drawing attention to it Shakespeare is showing us that their relationship is unnatural - just like the King’s spot on the throne.

Parallelism:

“With one auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delite and dole.” - Lines 11-13

- The parallelism is used to make this passage stand out. This is the first time that we hear King Claudius say anything, and it is the unnaturalness of his marriage. This underlines the fact that the death of the former king was an aberration from the natural order of being.

“Nay, it is; I know not “seems.”
Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour or the visage,” - Lines 77-87

- This also stands out because it is Hamlet calling out his mother for her hypocritical nature, dressing in black and crying, but then immediately marrying someone else. This underlines the fact that Hamlet does not like his mother and that she is a hypocrite.

Oxymoron:

“Defeated joy” - 10, oxymoron

This once again underscores the unnaturalness of the match between the King and the Queen (who were once bother and sister in law).

“To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras, - / Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears / Of this his nephew’s purpose, - to suppress / His further gait herein; in that the levies / The list, and full proportions, are all made / Out of his subject” - Metaphor, Diction

Motif:

“Together with all forms, modes, shapes of grief / For they are actions a man might play;”

- Here Hamlet invokes the motif of **appearance vs reality**. Shapes of grief in this context means the shows of grief, mode was also formerly used to discuss fashion or popularity. More than that, he compares it to a play and his mother’s grief to an actor. Specifically, Shakespeare is bringing our attention to the appearance of loyalty and he questions the reality.

Repetition:

“And now, Laertes, what’s the news with you? / You told us of some suit: what is’t, Laertes?”

- The repetition of someone’s name or title is used in this scene to indicate how much respect or esteem the speaker holds the person in. This can be seen in how Hamlet is unhappy with his mother’s remarriage, and only refers to her as “madame” instead of mother the entire scene. It can also be seen in this piece of dialogue. In the entire scene, the King uses Hamlet’s name twice to address him (and once to reference him), while he uses Laertes’ name in almost every line that is addressed to him. This tells the audience that Hamlet’s uncle does not like Hamlet, but prefers Laertes.

Foreshadowing:

“with mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,” - 12 (also Antithesis)

- This is foreshadowing of the fact that Claudius killed the last king. In-story it is just him naming off unnatural things that don’t go together, but it can also be seen as foreshadowing that Claudius found “mirth” in the funeral of the last King. The antithesis in this also underlines the idea that there has been a reversal of nature.

Connector: Aidan Huang

“Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother’s death/The memory be green, and that it us befitted/To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom/To be contracted in one brow of woe,/Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature/That we with wisest sorrow think on him/Together with remembrance of ourselves” (1.2.2-7).

In this passage, Claudius talks about King Hamlet’s “green” death meaning recently. He states that it’s appropriate to mourn his death, but everyone should also be thinking about his own self-being. This is very similar to Disney’s Lion King where Scar acknowledges Mufasa and Simba’s death, but wants everyone to focus on his leadership.

The idea of fallen royalty alludes to the time period when Hamlet was written. At this time, Queen Elizabeth’s era was coming to an end, and there was a lot of uncertainty about the future of the kingdom. Since Shakespeare is aware that his audience is uncertain of whom they should be loyal to because the throne may change from Queen Elizabeth to a new ruler soon (possibly King James) he is reflecting the uncertainty in his play and writing a cautionary tale that when people are uncertain of the loyalty of friends and family, it can lead to tragedy.

“But to persever/In obstinate condolement is a course/Of impious stubbornness; ‘tis unmanly grief” (1.2.92-95).

In this passage, Claudius tells Hamlet that mourning for his father excessively is not manly, and that he should change. This idea of “manliness” connects to Macbeth where Lady Macbeth accuses Macbeth for not being “manly” enough which causes him to give in to his ambitions. It seems that in Shakespeare’s time, a man’s manliness is very important which is why both Claudius and Lady Macbeth attack Hamlet and Macbeth’s manhood in order to persuade them.

“But even then the morning cock crew loud,/And at the sound it shrunk in haste away/And vanished from our sight (1.2.217-219).

In this passage, Horatio describes how the ghost disappears at the sound of the cock which signifies the ghost is scared of the day. This behaviour alludes to the ghost science of the Elizabeth era. During this time, it is believed that ghosts could only be out of the underworld/afterlife after the witching hour (midnight). The ghosts that were ominous usually disappear at the break of dawn. The fact that King Hamlet’s ghost vanishes at dawn shows the audience that he has ominous intentions.

“Pale, or red?/ Nay, very pale” (231-232).

In this passage, Horatio tells Hamlet that the ghost is “very pale” suggesting that Denmark is ill. It also alludes to The Pale Rider, who is one of the Four Horsemen of the apocalypse who rides the horse of death; an omen of darkness and suffering. The ghost’s appearance and symbolism show the social (and perhaps moral) decay of Denmark after the King’s death.