

HAMLET

Directed by Franco Zeffirelli (1990)
Starring Mel Gibson, Glenn Close
and Alan Bates.



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Hamlet (1990)
by Franco Zeffirelli -
Scene 1

SCENE 1

OVER TO YOU

- ❶ Hamlet is visited by his father's ghost. Watch the scene for the first time and underline the correct option:
 1. Hamlet is on the castle wall / in the dining hall.
 2. It is morning / night time.
 3. Hamlet seems calm / agitated.
 4. His father's ghost seems determined / depressed.
- ❷ What elements of body language best communicate Hamlet's mood?
- ❸ Without looking at the film script can you say what the ghost tells Hamlet about his death?
- ❹ Now read the film script and watch the scene again. What is the ghost asking Hamlet to do?
- ❺ How would you describe the atmosphere in this scene?
- ❻ What different thoughts and emotions might now be going through Hamlet's mind after what he has just heard? Discuss.
- ❼ Film director, Franco Zeffirelli, only provides half of the ghost's speech and is only faithful to 30% of Shakespeare's original text throughout the film. Do you find this choice:
 - ☐ damaging to the original work by Shakespeare
 - ☐ a sensible way of making Shakespeare more appealing to modern audiences

▼ Mel Gibson
starring as
Hamlet in Franco
Zeffirelli's film.



FILM SCRIPT

- GHOST. I am thy father's spirit ,
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
[...] But that I am forbid
- 5 To tell the secrets of my prison house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul,
[...] List, list, oh list!
If thou didst ever thy dear father love -
- 10 [...] Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.
HAMLET. Murder?
GHOST. Murder most foul, as in the best it is,
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.
- 15 [...] 'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,
A serpent stung me.
[...] but know, thou noble youth,
That serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.
- 20 HAMLET. O my prophetic soul!
My uncle?



▲ Mel Gibson and Glenn Close in a scene from Franco Zeffirelli's film *Hamlet*.

SCENE 2

After being visited by his father's ghost Hamlet has decided to pretend he is mad while planning his course of action, although he remains doubtful and uncertain of what to do. Now watch and listen to the first part of Hamlet's famous soliloquy, which comes later in the play, and answer the questions below.



8 Zeffirelli chose a crypt for the scene of this famous soliloquy.

1. Why is this a suitable choice?
2. What part of Hamlet's speech is highlighted by this environment?
3. In what ways is Hamlet's mood now different from the first scene? (Look at facial expressions, tone of voice.) Underline your choices:
 - ☐ hysterical
 - ☐ pensive
 - ☐ relieved
 - ☐ tormented
 - ☐ resigned
 - ☐ reflective

9 Is Mel Gibson's Hamlet convincing in your opinion?