

## **HAMLET – ADVICE FROM POLONIUS**

### **Overview**

In this lesson, the students will deconstruct Polonius' speech with a focus on analysing and communicating the meaning of the work.

Grade  
Level

Subject  
Area

Curriculum Expectations and Learning  
Outcome

Time  
Needed

Space

Materials

7-12

English,  
Drama

Explain how the activity provides insight into different types of roles with a range of perspectives on social interaction and power relationships;

Evaluate the effectiveness of a speech and the language of persuasion;

Analyse a dramatic work to determine how it communicates ideas.

1 class  
Period

Desks in groups, then open spaces for exploring the text

Attached handouts of Activities

## For the Teacher

### Brainstorm:

- ◆ Ask the class the following:
- 1. What is the best advice you ever received? Why?
- 2. What is the worst advice you ever received? Why?
- 3. What do you look for if you were asked to create the perfect piece of advice?

### The Activity:

- ◆ Distribute to the class the student worksheets and read together the full text or play a recording of the speech, while they follow the text.
- ◆ Divide the class into groups of four.
- ◆ In groups have them read each piece of advice aloud (#1 – 8). Circulate and ensure they understand the meaning of the words and phrases.
- ◆ The groups will brainstorm and write in their own words what each sentence is about.
- ◆ When they have finished, have the students read aloud what they've written, ensuring that each person in the group reads a section.
- ◆ Have the students go back to Shakespeare's original text and have them read aloud, again ensuring all students are involved.
- ◆ Repeat, this time have each group stand in a circle. As each student reads his/her section, encourage him/her to make eye-contact with someone in the circle as if s/he is giving them advice.

### Debrief:

- ◆ Ask the class the following or have them write a one-page response to any of these questions:
- ☐ What did you discover about the relationship between Polonius and Laertes?
- ☐ Do you think Polonius is sincere or smug?
- ☐ When you re-wrote the Polonius' words and phrases using contemporary English, did you find the speech as evocative and as effective as Shakespeare's?

### Optional Writing Assignment:

- ☐ If you were Laertes writing to your best buddy about the chat you just had with your dad, what would you tell him/her?

## STUDENT WORKSHEETS– ADVICE FROM POLONIUS, Act I, scene 3

*Laertes is about to leave for France and Polonius gives his son some fatherly advice.*

1. Read together the full text.
2. In groups read each piece of advice aloud (see next page #'s 1 - 8). Make sure you understand the meaning of the words and phrases.
3. Brainstorm with your group and write in your own words what each sentence is about.
4. Read aloud what you've written, each person taking a section.
5. Now go back to Shakespeare's original text and read it aloud with each person taking a section.
6. Stand in a small circle and read your section of Shakespeare's text to the group. Try to make eye-contact with someone in the circle as if you are giving them advice.

Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame!

The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,

And you are stayed for. There, my blessing with thee,

And these few precepts in thy memory

Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,

Nor any unproportioned thought his act.

Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,

Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel,

But do not dull thy palm with entertainment

Of each new-hatched, unfledged courage. Beware

Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,

Bear't that th' opposèd may beware of thee.

Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;

Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,

But not expressed in fancy: rich, not gaudy;

For the apparel oft proclaims the man,

And they in France of the best rank and station

Are of a most select and generous chief in that.

Neither a borrower nor a lender be,

For loan oft loses both itself and friend,

And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.

This above all, to thine own self be true,

And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not then be false to any man.

Farewell, my blessing season this in thee!

*the wind is behind you ready to drive you on*

*awaited*

*moral principles*

*make sure you imprint*

*ill-considered*

*friendly, sociable*

*worthiness tested*

*fasten firmly*

*squander your hospitality/make your gesture meaningless*

*newly born, untried, comrade/fellow rogue*

*manage it so that your opponent*

*opinion/criticism*

*clothing*

*frivolous fashion; expensive but not ostentatious*

*are particularly distinguished in their choice of dress*

*good housekeeping management/economy*

*let my blessings help to embed these precepts in you*

**Decipher the meaning of each piece of advice and put it in your own words.**

#	Polonius' Words	In Your Own Words
1	Give thy thoughts no tongue, Nor any unproportioned thought his act.	
2	Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.	
3	Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel, But do not dull thy palm with entertainment Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade.	
4	Beware Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in, Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee.	
5	Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice; Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.	
6	Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, But not expressed in fancy: rich, not gaudy; For the apparel oft proclaims the man, And they in France of the best rank and station Are of a most select and generous chief in that.	
7	Neither a borrower nor a lender be, For loan oft loses both itself and friend, And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.	
8	This above all, to thine ownself be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.	