***Hamlet*** **Act 3, scene 2 – The play is performed**

**Hamlet’s play is performed for Claudius**

Hamlet directs the players on how to act; he continues to taunt Ophelia, making sexual jokes at her expense. The play is performed with Hamlet providing a commentary; when Claudius recognises a similarity between the play and his own actions, he calls for it to stop. Hamlet thinks the play has been a success, confirming Claudius’ guilt. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter and tell Hamlet that Gertrude wants to see him. Hamlet bitterly criticises his two friends for their betrayal.

**Hamlet’s relationships are developed**

***Horatio*** – admires he is not ‘passion’s slave’ and praises his self-control

***Gertrude*** – refuses to sit by her; play also criticises Gertrude; Hamlet realises he must confront her but control his anger

***Ophelia*** – makes crude comments towards her; testing her honesty by seeing how she react. Sarcastic mocking and contempt anticipates anger he unleashes on Gertrude in 3.4

***Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*** – manipulates them, whilst attacking them for their dishonesty; tells them he will not be ‘played’, using the extended metaphor of an instrument to demonstrate

1. **Hamlet’s (as mouthpiece for Shakespeare?) comments on the purpose of theatre/acting:**

‘to hold as twere a mirror up to Nature to show Virtue her own feature, Scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.’ (21-24)

1. What does this quotation suggest about what theatre should do?

Drama as a mirror/ reflection of reality

Providing a different perspective; viewing another side of reality

Pressures of time/form – eg. Society’s expectations

Judgement/ harsh truth of reality

1. Read the excerpt from critic, Rex Gibson, and make notes upon the way the world of *Hamlet*/ the nature of Denmark reflected upon the society of Shakespeare’s time.

Denmark and England – conflict now resolved by scheming (Elizabeth I)

Hamlet ‘modern man’ – sceptical/ doubting/ lack of acceptance/ introspection

1. Can you think of ways in which the world of Hamlet and Denmark reflects upon aspects of our contemporary world?
   1. Hamlet an individual and not praised for it – we still live in a society that conformity
   2. Government deception/ secrecy

1. **Hamlet’s relationships with other characters are developed:**

Hamlet to Horatio: ‘For thou hast been/ One in suffering all that suffers nothing -/ As man that Fortune’s buffets and rewards/ Hast ta’en with equal thanks…blest are those/Whose blood and judgment are so well co-meddled that they are not a pipe for fortunes’ finger.’ (61-66)

Admiration/ loyal friend

Horatio opposite of Denmark (corruption)

NT 2015 – Tattoos, backpack, trainers – movement; capable of change

Hamlet to Ophelia: ‘Lady shall I lie in your lap?’ (108) ‘Be not you ashamed to show, he’ll not shame to tell you what it means.’ (137-138)

Contrast to previous scene

RSC 2009 – ‘touchy feely’ – reliant on her presence

Intimacy? An act?

Crude (although oph allows it)

Riddle – showing the truth/ body part?

Hamlet to Gertrude: ‘Madam, how you like this play?’ (223)

Not impressed – ‘the lady doth protest too much me thinks’ – Gertrude commenting on exaggeration. SILENT!

Phrase associated with untruth – linked to play -

Hamlet to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: ‘Why, look you now how unworthy a thing you make of me: you would play upon me! You would seem to know my stops, you would pluck the heart of my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest notes to my compass.’ (355-359)

RG assume they can manipulate – knows what they – extended metaphor of instruments –

Reflects state control over citizenship; state decides on the ‘music’ / conducts/ you make them play what you want hear (e.g. Claudius in 1.1. – courtiers say what he wants to hear; mirror register; Hamlet)

Using the quotations above, explore how Shakespeare develops Hamlet’s relationships with other characters in this act.

1. **The dumb show and the play – how does Claudius respond?**

The dumb show is a typical convention of Elizabethan drama; a dramatic mime of the upcoming play. This dumb show acts out the murder of the King, a mirror of Claudius’ murder of old Hamlet. Critics have been interested in why Claudius doesn’t seem to respond (stage directions/text leaves it very open)

A critic, Dover Wilson, suggests that the reason he doesn’t respond is because he is too distracted by Gertrude (further suggesting that desire for her has been the driving force of his actions). What other ways might you interpret this scene? If you were directing this scene, how would you have him respond? For example, one Russian version had him slow clap and contemptuously tip the actors.

Appearing calm; refusal to directly address

Doesn’t want expose himself

Asks for light at end; suggests anger

Ophelia – the king rises – not response to women – thoughtful

‘conscience of king- Hamlet asks Horatio to watch

1. **Hamlet’s final soliloquy – the melodramatic imagery of stock revenge tragedy**

In something that is quickly becoming a structural pattern, Hamlet’s final soliloquy at the end of this scene (378-end) sees him revert back to the role of ‘revenge hero’:

* What typical imagery of Jacobean revenge tragedy can you find here and to what extent do you see this as genuine resolve to take revenge?
* Hamlet promises to ‘speak daggers’ to Gertrude ‘but use none’. What does he mean?

RSC (2009) – filmed himself giving this speech

Lots of language associated with J REV Trag – ‘daggers’ ‘hot blood’ ‘violence’ – exaggeration – envisages himself as violent

Typical revenge tragedy; motivated by desire for vengeance

To Gertrude – desire to harm but not physically; desire to make truth clear to her

Is he being hypocritical? His ‘soul’ wants to hurt her but ghost of father said not to.

Inner battle/ conflict?