HAMLET

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Retold by Helen Street

Language Comparison

In this language comparison, you can see the Real Reads retelling of *Hamlet* with William Shakespeare's original lines highlighted in bold italic.



www.realreads.co.uk

HAMLET

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE THE CASTLE AT ELSINORE

King

Good friends, though yet of my dear brother's death *The memory be green* and it is right *to bear our hearts In grief*, yet we must bear remembrance of ourselves, And so in sorrow and in joy have we our sometime sister wed to be our queen.

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son, How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Hamlet

Not so, my lord. I am too much in the sun.

Queen

Good Hamlet, cast thy gloomy colour off

And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

Do not forever with thy downcast eye

Seek for thy noble father in the dust.

King

'Tis unmanly grief to grieve so long.

Throw down to earth this woe and think of us

As of a father. For let the world take note,

You are the most immediate to our throne.

And as to your desire to go from here —

We do beseech you to remain at court.

Queen

I pray thee stay with us. Go not to Wittenberg.

Hamlet

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

King

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.

Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come.

Hamlet

Oh, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the great almighty had not fixed
His laws against self-slaughter. O god, god,
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seems to me all the uses of this world!
'Tis but an unweeded garden grown to seed.
That it should come to this! But two months dead —
Before her shoes were old with which she walked
Behind my father's body, my mother
Married with my uncle with wicked speed.
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

Horatio

Hail to your lordship.

Hamlet

Horatio – what brings you here to court?

Horatio

My lord, I came to see your father's funeral. I saw him once. He was a goodly king.

Hamlet

I shall not look upon his like again.

Horatio

My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

Hamlet

The king, my father?

Horatio

Aye, my lord, the king.

His ghost, or else his like, was seen to walk Upon the battlements, but would not speak.

Hamlet

Then I will watch with you tonight. Perhaps 'Twill walk again. If so, I'll challenge it.

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Laertes

And now farewell, dear sister, I must leave. My studies beckon me. I go to France, But let me hear from you without delay.

Ophelia

Indeed you shall.

Laertes

And as for Hamlet's trifling favour – *Perhaps he loves you now* but by his birth, He is not free to choose the one he wants. **So keep you in the rear of your affection** And wary that you do not lose your heart.

Polonius

Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
But first, my blessing and advice to you.
Those friends thou hast, if they prove true to thee,
Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops
of steel.

Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice.

Neither a borrower nor a lender be,

For loan oft loses both itself and friend.

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 blessings once again to thee.

Laertes

Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord. Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well What I have said to you.

Polonius

What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

Ophelia

So please you, something touching the lord Hamlet.

Polonius

What is between you? Give me up the truth.

Ophelia

He hath, my lord, of late, made many tenders Of his affections to me.

Polonius

Affection, pooh!

Young men say things they do not mean.

From this time forth, have no more talk with him.

Ophelia

I shall obey, my lord.

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE THE BATTLEMENTS

Hamlet

The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

What is the hour?

Horatio

I think 'tis almost twelve.

But look, my lord, it comes!

Hamlet

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

Thou com'st in my father's shape to haunt me, Say, why is this? Canst thou not rest in peace?

Horatio

It beckons you to go away with it.

Hamlet

Where wilt thou lead me? Speak, I'll go no further.

Ghost

If thou didst ever thy dear father love, Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

Hamlet

Murder!

Ghost

'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard, A serpent stung me and 'tis so I died. The serpent that did sting thy father's life Now wears his crown.

Hamlet

O, my prophetic soul! My uncle?

Ghost

Into my ear, he poured a poisoned juice. Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand *Of life, of crown, of queen at once* deprived. Revenge me, Hamlet, and *remember me*.

Horatio

Heaven preserve thee, my lord, 'tis gone!

Hamlet

Horatio, swear this upon my sword,

Never make known what you have seen tonight.

Horatio

I swear, my lord.

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE THE CASTLE

Polonius

How now, Ophelia. What's the matter?

Ophelia

Alas, my lord, I have been so affrighted!

Polonius

With what, in the name of god?

Ophelia

My lord, as I was sewing in my room, Lord Hamlet, with his clothes in disarray, Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other, And with a look so piteous to behold Appeared before me.

Polonius

Mad for thy love?

Ophelia

My lord, I do not know, But truly I do fear it.

Polonius

This is the very ecstasy of love
That cannot lead to anything of good.
This must be known. I will go seek the king.

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO THE CASTLE

King

Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!

You answer swift my hasty summons here.

As you are friends from our dear Hamlet's youth,

Perhaps he will reveal to you the cause

Of his most recent transformation –

His strange behaviour, more than grief should show.

Guildenstern

We lay our service freely at your feet.

Queen

And I beseech you instantly to visit

My too much changed son. Go, find him out.

Polonius

My lord, I do believe that I have found The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

King

O speak of that: that do I long to hear.

Queen

I doubt it is no other but two things: His father's death and our o'er hasty marriage.

Polonius

I will be brief. *Your noble son is mad* – Is mad with love for fair Ophelia.

King

How shall we know if this is true?

Polonius

I'll bid my daughter wait for him sometime When he goes pacing up and down this hall, As is his custom. We will watch concealed And mark his countenance when they do meet.

Queen

But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

Polonius

Away, I do beseech you both, away!

Guildenstern

My honoured lord!

Rosencrantz

My most dear lord!

Hamlet

My excellent good friends! Good lads, how do you both?

Guildenstern

Happy, in that we are not over-happy, On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.

Hamlet

What brings you here to Elsinore?

Rosencrantz

To visit you, my lord, no other reason.

Hamlet

Your looks betray you. I know that *you were sent for,* and I will tell you why.

I have of late, but know not why, lost all my mirth

and indeed, so heavy are my spirits that even this good earth seems but a barren land.

This sky, *this majestical roof fretted with golden fire*, appears to me but foul and polluted gas.

Rosencrantz

My lord, we passed a band of players on our way, And here they come to offer service to the court.

Hamlet

Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore.

We'll hear a play tomorrow. Can you play *The Murder of Gonzago*?

Player

Aye, my lord.

Hamlet

We'll have that, and I will write some extra lines for you to say.

Now, see these players well-provided for. Take them in.

I'll have these players play something resembling The murder of my father, before the king.

I'll watch my uncle's face to see if he Betrays his guilt. Then will I know my task,

When I have proof. Oh yes, the play's the thing

Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

ACT TWO, SCENE THREE THE CASTLE

King

And did you get from him the very cause Of his confusion?

Rosencrantz

Answer will he not,

But with a crafty madness keeps aloof.

Guildenstern

Yet with a kind of joy he did receive The news that certain players were in court.

Polonius

'Tis true. And he beseeched me to request Your majesties' attendance at the play.

King

With all my heart.

Go stay with him a while.

Sweet Gertrude, leave us, too. Hamlet is sent for That he may meet, as if by accident,

The fair Ophelia.

Polonius and I will watch unseen and judge If't be the affliction of his love or no

That thus he suffers for.

Polonius

Ophelia, walk you here. Read on this book. I hear him coming; let's withdraw my lord.

Hamlet

To be, or not to be; that is the question:

Whether 'tis better to suffer the pain

That life may bring, or else to end it all.

To die, to sleep, perchance to dream, ah me.

But in that sleep of death, what dreams may come

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil?

But soft, the fair Ophelia!

Ophelia

My lord.

I have some gifts of yours I would return.

Hamlet

I did love you once.

Ophelia

Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Hamlet

You should not have believed me. I loved you not.

I am a man, and all of us are knaves.

Get thee to a nunnery! Why bring into this world more sinners?

To a nunnery go, and quickly, too. Farewell.

Ophelia

O, *heavenly powers, restore him*. Woe is me, He is so changed.

King

Love? I do not think that there is love Behind his madness, good Polonius. And yet *there's something in his soul* could prove Some danger to us all, therefore, shall I Decree that Hamlet soon be sent away.

Polonius

My lord, do as you please, but if you will, Allow his mother all alone to talk
To him about his grief.

ACT THREE, SCENE ONE THE CASTLE

Hamlet

There is a play tonight before the king:

One scene of it comes near the circumstance,

Which I have told thee, of my father's death.

I pray you, when you see that act, observe My uncle. If he does not show his guilt, The ghost we saw did not speak fair and true.

Horatio

If he betray the slightest down-cast eye I'll find him out.

Hamlet

They are coming to the play. Get you a place.

Ophelia

The king rises.

Polonius

Stop the play!

King

Give me some light. Enough!

Polonius

Lights, lights, lights!

Hamlet

O good Horatio, saw you that?

Horatio

Indeed.

Hamlet

The ghost spoke true. There was the proof.

Polonius

The king, my lord, is out of sorts!

Hamlet

With drink?

Polonius

No, sir, in anger. I am sent to say The queen desires to speak to you at once.

Hamlet

Then I will come to my mother by and by.

ACT THREE, SCENE TWO THE CASTLE

King

I like him not, nor stands it safe with us To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you, And he to England shall along with you.

Guildenstern

We shall do as you say, your majesty.

King

My crime cannot be pardoned, this I know.
As Cain was cursed by heaven, so shall I be.
Perhaps a prayer? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?
That cannot be, since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.

Hamlet

I'll kill him now while he does say his prayers –Yet if I do then he will go to heaven.

'Tis not revenge to send this villain there.

King

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

ACT THREE, SCENE THREE THE QUEEN'S BEDROOM

Hamlet

Mother, mother, mother!

Polonius

Mind well you tell him he has gone too far. I'll hide behind this curtain and hear all.

Hamlet

Now, mother, what's the matter?

Queen

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Hamlet

Mother, you have my father much offended.

Queen

Have you forgotten who I am?

Hamlet

You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife, And – would it were not so – you are my mother.

Queen

Help, help!

Polonius

Help, help!

Hamlet

What have we here? A rat?

Queen

O what a rash and bloody deed is this!

Hamlet

A bloody deed! Almost as bad, good mother, As kill a king and marry with his brother.

Queen

As kill a king?

Hamlet

Ay, lady, 'twas my word.

Your husband is a murderer and a villain.

Queen

O Hamlet, speak no more.

These words like daggers enter in my ears.

Hamlet

You must not tell the king I told you this.

As for this lord, I do repent my deed.

I will answer well the death I gave him – I must to England, you know that?

Queen

Alack, I had forgot.

Hamlet

There's letters sealed, and my two school-fellows – Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged – Will carry them – and me – across the sea. Mother, good night.

Queen

Ah, mine own lord, what have I seen tonight!

King

What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

Queen

Mad as the sea and wind when both contend Which is the mightier. He heard a sound And drawing out his sword he killed unseen The good Polonius.

King

Oh, heavy deed!

Had I been there in place of that old man, It would be me who lies now cold and dead. The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch, But we will ship him hence. Ho! Guildenstern!

King

Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain. Go seek him out. I pray you haste in this. Come, Gertrude. O come away My soul is full of discord and dismay.

ACT THREE, SCENE FOUR A HALL IN THE CASTLE

Rosencrantz

Where he has hidden the dead body, lord,

We cannot get from him.

King

But where is he?

Rosencrantz

Ho, Guildenstern! Bring in my lord.

King

Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

Hamlet

At supper.

King

At supper? Where?

Hamlet

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten – by the worm.

King

Where is Polonius?

Hamlet

If you find him not within a month, you will smell him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

King

Go seek him there.

Hamlet

He will stay till you come.

King

We dearly grieve for that which thou hast done And therefore, we must send thee hence with speed To England. You must take your leave tonight. The letters that they take demand in short The certain death of Hamlet. *Do it, England, For till I know 'tis done,* I'll have no peace.

ACT FOUR, SCENE ONE A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Queen

I will not speak with her.

Horatio

Madam, her mood requires your pity now.

She speaks much of her father though her words Make little sense. She sighs and beats her heart.

'Twere good that she were spoken with.

Ophelia

Where is the beauteous Majesty of Denmark?

Queen

How now, Ophelia?

Ophelia

He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

King

How do you, pretty lady?

Ophelia

They say the owl was a baker's daughter.

Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.

King

How long has she been thus?

Ophelia

I hope all will be well. Come, my coach. Good night, ladies, good night.

King

Follow her, Horatio, and keep good watch.

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death – and now behold!
O Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not all alone
But in hattalions

Laertes

O thou vile king. Where is my father?

King

Dead.

Queen

But not by him.

Laertes

How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with.
I'll be revenged for what has happened here.

King

That I am guiltless of your father's death, I do assure you.

Laertes

Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!

O heavens, is't possible a young maid's wits

Should be as mortal as an old man's life?

Ophelia

They bore him barefaced on the bier, Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny, And in his grave rained many a tear – Fare you well, my dove!

Laertes

By heaven, thy madness shall be paid in full!

King

I pray thee, calm thyself, good Laertes, And I will answer all that you would know.

ACT FOUR, SCENE TWO THE CASTLE

Horatio

'Horatio, we were two days at sea when a pirate ship gave chase. We, being slow of sail, did the best we could when they came alongside. In the fighting I jumped onto their ship, and as soon as they drew clear of our boat, I found myself their only prisoner. But they have treated me well and brought me back to Denmark's shores in return for favours that I may give. Come to me with as much haste as thou wouldst fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb. The sailors that brought this letter will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England; of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell, thine own Hamlet.'

ACT FOUR, SCENE THREE THE CASTLE

King

Now you have heard how blameless I have been, How Hamlet hath your noble father slain, So you must put me in your heart for friend.

Laertes

Indeed. Yet still he is at liberty.
Why have you not brought judgement on this man?

King

The queen, his mother, loves her son so much,
That it would break her heart, and so break mine
To see her in distress. And you must know:
So deeply does he hold the people's love,
That they would turn against me if I did.

Laertes

And so I have a noble father lost,
And sister driven mad by loss and grief.
But my revenge will come.

King

It will be so.

Messenger

Letters, my lord, from Hamlet.

King

From Hamlet? Who brought them?

Messenger

Sailors, my lord.

King

'High and mighty, you should know that I am in your kingdom. Tomorrow I shall come before you and recount the reason for my sudden return. Hamlet.'

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?

Laertes

I do not know, my lord, but let him come!

It warms the very sickness in my heart

That I shall live and tell him to his teeth

'Thus diest thou'.

King

If it be so, will you be ruled by me?

Laertes

Ay, my lord.

King

I have a plan. 'Twill make his death appear An accident and you shall be its source.

Laertes

How shall this be?

King

Your reputation as a skilful swordsman
Has in the past made Hamlet envious
And beg some day to play a match with you.
We'll organise a wager on your skills
And in his great excitement, he will not
Observe that you will use an untipped sword.
So may you stab him for your father's sake.

Laertes

And for the purpose, I'll anoint my sword With deadly poison to bring certain death.

King

But if you fail to strike him, there must be Another plan. I'll have prepared for him A poisoned draught that I will offer him When he is hot and dry and calls for drink.

Queen

One woe doth tread upon another's heel, So fast they follow. Your sister's drowned, Laertes.

Laertes

Drowned? O where?

Queen

There is a willow grows aslant a brook

And there Ophelia did fantastic garlands make

Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long-purples.

But clamb'ring on the bough to hang them there,
It broke, and she fell in the weeping brook.

Her clothes spread wide and bore her up awhile

Till that her garments, heavy with their drink

Pulled down the poor wretch to a muddy death.

Laertes

Alas, then she is drowned?
Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears.

King

Let's follow, Gertrude.

How much I had to do to calm his rage!

Now fear I this will start it all again.

ACT FIVE, SCENE ONE THE GRAVEYARD

Hamlet

Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?

Horatio

He is used to it, my lord.

Hamlet

How long hast thou been a gravemaker?

Gravedigger

I came to it that very day that young Hamlet was born, he that is mad and sent into England.

Hamlet

Why was he sent into England?

Gravedigger

Why, because he was mad. He shall recover his wits there, and if he do not, it's no great matter there.

Hamlet

Why?

Gravedigger

No one will notice it, for there *the men are as mad* as *he!*

Hamlet

Whose skull is that?

Gravedigger

He was a mad rogue. He poured a flagon of wine

over my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

Hamlet

Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest.

He hath borne me on his back a thousand times. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft.

Yet here is all that's left of man – some bones and dust.

But soft! Let's step aside. Here comes the king,

The queen, the courtiers. Who is this they follow?

Laertes

Oh, lay her in the earth and from this place May violets spring.

A heavenly angel shall my sister be.

Queen

Sweets to the sweet. Farewell.

I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife.

Hamlet

What, the fair Ophelia?

Laertes

And cursed be he that was the cause of this.

Hamlet

Now shall I, Hamlet the Dane, show my grief.

Laertes

The devil take thy soul!

Hamlet

I prithee take thy fingers from my throat. I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers Could not with all their quantity of love Make up my sum!

King

Pluck them asunder.

Queen

Hamlet, Hamlet!

King

Oh, he is mad, Laertes.

Hamlet

I know not why you treat me as you do.

King

I pray thee, good Horatio, attend your lord.

King

Patience, my friend. Our plan will soon succeed.

ACT FIVE, SCENE TWO THE GREAT HALL OF THE CASTLE

Hamlet

As I did tell you, good Horatio,
I had misgivings of young Rosencrantz
And of young Guildenstern, my one-time friends.
So, on the voyage, while they were fast asleep
I read the letters from the king. In short,
They ordered that my head should be struck off.

Horatio

'Tis hard to believe it, my lord.

Courtier

My lord, his Majesty has bid me tell you that he has laid a wager on your head. He has bet six horses against six French swords that you will beat Laertes at fencing by at least three hits.

Hamlet

I am sorry I behaved so badly to Laertes. But I shall put that right and join him in this friendly match. *Let the foils be brought.*

Horatio

You will lose this wager, my lord.

Hamlet

I do not think so. Since he went to France, I have been in continual practice.

And yet there is an ill feeling in my heart.

Horatio

If thy mind dislike anything, obey it.

I will stall them and say you are not fit.

Hamlet

No, I will defy these warnings.

If it is my time to die, then let it be.

Who can tell what future waits for us?

The readiness is all.

Hamlet

Give me your pardon, sir. I've done you wrong.

What I have done, I here proclaim was madness.

Laertes

I cannot offer pardon at this time

Yet will I be a gentleman in this.

Hamlet

Thanks be for that. Now come, give us the foils.

King

You know the wager?

Hamlet

Very well, my lord.

King

Set me the cups of wine upon that table.

If Hamlet give the first or second hit,

The king shall drink to Hamlet's better skill.

Come, sirs, begin!

King

Stay, give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine.

Here's to thy health!

Give him the cup!

Hamlet

I'll play this bout first; set it by a while.

Queen

The queen shall drink to thy fortune, Hamlet.

King

Gertrude, do not drink.

Queen

I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.

king

It is the poisoned cup – it is too late!

Hamlet

I dare not drink yet, madam; by and by. Come, for the third, Laertes. You do but dally.

Attendant

Look to the queen there, ho!

Horatio

They bleed on both sides! How is it, my lord?

Laertes

I am justly killed with mine own treachery.

Hamlet

How does the queen?

King

She swoons to see them bleed.

Queen

No, no, the drink, the drink! O my dear Hamlet!

The drink, the drink! I am poisoned!

Hamlet

O villainy! Ho! Let the door be locked. Treachery! Seek it out.

Laertes

It is here, Hamlet. Hamlet, thou art slain.

No med'cine in the world can do you good.

In thee there is not half an hour's life.

The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,

Untipped and laced with venom.

'Tis the king –

The king's to blame.

Hamlet

The point envenomed too! Then, venom, do thy work.

King

O, yet defend me, friends: I am but hurt.

Hamlet

Then drink this potion, murderous Dane!

Laertes

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet: Mine and my father's death come not upon thee, Nor thine on me.

Hamlet

Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee.

I am dead, Horatio.

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,

Live after me that you, with painful breath, May tell my story.

Horatio

Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince, And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.