

Hamlet abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 1

Introspection

Situation: At a moment when the king, queen and others are gathered together, continuing to fret over the cause of Hamlet's depressed behavior, Polonius and Ophelia along with the king and queen withdraw from the room as Hamlet enters. This is the time when Hamlet offers us his famous "to be or not to be" soliloquy.

KING: Sweet Gertrude, leave us, for we have closely sent for Hamlet hither, that he, as 'twere by accident, may here affront Ophelia, her father and myself.

QUEEN: I shall obey you. And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish that your good beauties be the happy cause of Hamlet's wildness.

OPHELIA: Madam, I wish it many.

Queen exits.

POLONIUS: Ophelia, walk you here. I hear him coming. Let's withdraw, my lord.
They withdraw. Hamlet enters.

Hamlet to himself, No. 3

To be or not to be is the question.
Is it nobler to bear the misfortune
Of slings and arrows or by opposing
A sea of troubles end them? To die, to
Sleep and by a sleep to find the ending
To the heartache and natural shocks you
Are heir to is an ending to be sought.
Yet to die with the chance to dream ought not
Be sought, for not knowing in that sleep of
Death what dreams may come must give us pause. There's
The respect for life, for who'd suffer love,
Accept oppressors, what the weakest bears,
And the law's delays, when he might rather
Relieve himself from life with a dagger.

Hamlet to himself, No. 4

Who would bear these burdens, to grunt and sweat
Under a weary life if not to let
The dread of what's after death, the unknown
Far-off land from whose bourn no traveler
Returns, make us rather bear these ills sown
Than fly blindly alone to another
That we know not of. Thus conscience doth make
Us cowards all, afraid to die, to wake
No more. Our natural resolution
Becomes a look of sickness, cowering

In a shadow of thought, as when action
In great enterprises begins losing
Its motion through fear, as when a river
Deflected becomes mere stagnant water.