

OPHELIA

Polonius' daughter. She and Hamlet were in love but their relationship is strained during the play. Ophelia is constantly told how to behave by others: her father, her brother Laertes and Hamlet. Where Hamlet cannot bring himself to make decisions, Ophelia is not allowed to make her own decisions. She reluctantly gives in to Polonius's schemes to spy on Hamlet. Ophelia's inability to carve out her own identity in this overbearing court contributes to her going mad, and ultimately drowning in a brook.

LAERTES

Polonius' son and Ophelia's brother. He is in France for most of the play. Unlike Hamlet, Laertes is quick to act on his impulses and so he comes across as dynamic and earnest.

GHOST

The ghost of Hamlet's dead father. The ghost tells Hamlet that he was killed by Claudius and incites Hamlet to avenge his death. However, Hamlet shows some doubt as to whether this ghost is in fact his father's spirit or a malignant spectre tempting Hamlet to murder and inventing Claudius's crime.

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

Two slightly awkward members of the court who were friends with Hamlet at the University of Wittenberg. Claudius and Gertrude summon them to investigate Hamlet's mad behaviour.

MARCELLUS

The officer who first sees the ghost when he is on guard on the ramparts of Elsinore castle.

GRAVE DIGGER

A comic clown figure who sings and cracks jokes while he works.

