

Hamlet Timeline Steve Roth 2005

Hamlet Timeline Overview

1601		
Sunday, September 6	King Hamlet murdered	
Tuesday, September 8		John Shakespeare buried
Sunday, October 4	Claudius and Gertrude married	
Friday, October 30	The ghost walks.	Feast of Marcellus
Saturday, October 31	The ghost walks.	All Hallows Eve
Sunday, November 1	The ghost walks.	All Saints' Day
Monday, November 2	Court scene Laertes, Voltemand, and Cornelius depart. The ghost walks.	All Souls' Day
1602		
Monday, January 4	Ambassadors return. The players arrive.	
Tuesday, January 5	Mousetrap The ghost walks.	Twelfth Night
Wednesday, January 6	Hamlet and English ambassadors depart. Fortinbras departs for Poland.	Epiphany
Thursday, January 7	Hamlet taken by pirates.	
Saturday, February 13	Ophelia's madness. Laertes returns. Hamlet's letters arrive.	
Sunday, February 14	Hamlet returns. Graveyard and swordfight Fortinbras returns. English ambassadors return.	Valentine's Day Shrove Sunday

The Ghost Sequence

Day/Date	Time/Event	Text References
Friday, Oct. 30, Feast of Marcellus To Saturday morning, Oct. 31	1 a.m. Ghost appears to Bernardo and Marcellus.	
Saturday, Oct. 31, All Hallows Eve To Sunday morning, Nov. 1	1 a.m.: Ghost appears again to Bernardo and Marcellus.	

<p>Sunday, Nov. 1, All Saints' Day To Monday morning, Nov. 2</p>	<p>Midnight: Bernardo and Marcellus tell Horatio (again) of ghost's appearance on the preceding two nights. Ghost appears to Bernardo, Marcellus, and Horatio.</p>	<p>Francisco: "You come most carefully upon your hour." Bernardo: "'Tis now strook twelf." 1.1.8 Marcellus: "...this dreaded sight twice seen of us;/Therefore I have entreated him along;/With us to watch the minutes of this night," 1.1.35 Bernardo describing the previous encounters to Horatio: "...let us once again assail your ears;/.../What we have two nights seen;/.../Last night of all;/When yond same star.../.../Where now it burns,.../The bell then beating one—" [cut off by the ghost's appearance] 1.1.42 Marcellus: "Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour;/...hath he gone by our watch." 1.1.81 Marcellus, on agreeing to inform Hamlet: "I this morning know/Where we shall find him most convenient." 1.1.194</p>
<p>Monday, Nov. 2 All Souls' Day To Tuesday morning, Nov. 3</p>	<p>Evening: Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo tell Hamlet of the preceding three nights. Just before midnight: Ghost appears to Marcellus, Horatio, and Hamlet.</p>	<p>Hamlet to Bernardo: "Good even, sir." 1.2.173 Apparently Hamlet is engaged in the opening court scene, so Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo don't connect with him until evening. Horatio: "My lord, I think I saw him yesternight./.../Two nights together had these gentlemen./In the dead waste and middle of the night./Been thus encount' red:.../And I with them the third night kept the watch," 1.2.196, 205, 217 Hamlet: "Stayed it long?" Horatio: "While one with moderate haste might tell a hundreth." Bernardo and Marcellus: "Longer, longer." Horatio: "Not when I saw't." 1.2.253 [21] Hamlet: "Hold you the watch to-night?/.../I will watch to-night./.../Upon the platform 'twixt aleven and twelf/I'll visit you." 1.2.237, 260, 271 Hamlet: "What hour now?" Horatio: "I think it lacks of twelf." Marcellus: "No, it is stroock." Horatio: "Indeed? I heard it not. It then draws near the season/Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk." 1.4.5</p>

The Mousetrap Sequence

Act and Scene	Event	Text References
Monday, January 4		
Reported by Ophelia to	Hamlet appears in Ophelia's closet.	2.1.84

Polonius (2.1)		
2.1	Polonius' interview with Reynaldo	Reynaldo's exit immediately precedes Ophelia's entrance.
	Ophelia tells Polonius of Hamlet's visit.	Ophelia: "Oh my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted!" 2.1.85 Polonius: "Come, go with me. I will go seek the King./...Come, go we to the King./.../Come." 2.1.113 , 130 , 133
2.2	Cornelius and Voltemand report on their embassy.	Claudius: "...at our more considered time we'll read./Answer, and think upon this business." 2.2.90
	Polonius tells Gertrude and Claudius of Hamlet's visit to Ophelia's closet.	2.2.117
	Hamlet's encounter with the Players	Hamlet: "...we'll hear a play tomorrow./.../We'll ha't to-morrow night." 2.2.375 , 377
Tuesday, January 5: Twelfth Night (and morning of January 6, Epiphany)		
3.1	Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Polonius report on Hamlet to Claudius and Gertrude; Polonius invites them to the play.	Rosencrantz of Hamlet and the players: "...they have already order/This night to play before him." 3.1.24
	Nunnery scene	Claudius: "I have in quick determination/Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England" 3.1.151 Polonius: "...after the play/Let his queen-mother all alone entreat him..." 3.1.164
3.2	Mousetrap	
	Hamlet summoned to Gertrude	Hamlet: "'Tis now the very witching time of night,/When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out/Contagion to this world." 3.2.277
3.3	Claudius' "repentance"	Claudius to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: "I your commission will forthwith dispatch./And he to England shall along with you./The terms of our estate may not endure/Hazard so near 's as doth hourly grow/Out of his brows." 3.3.5
3.4	Gertrude's closet; the ghost walks.	
4.1	Gertrude reports to Claudius.	Claudius: "The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch/But we will ship him hence." 4.1.32
4.2	Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ask Hamlet for the body.	
4.3	Claudius sends Hamlet to England.	Claudius: "...must send thee hence/With fiery quickness; therefore prepare

		thymself./The bark is ready, and the wind at help./Th' associates tend, and every thing is bent/For England." 4.3.38 "Follow him at foot, tempt him with speed aboard./Delay it not, I'll have him hence to-night./Away, for every thing is seal'd and done/That else leans on th' affair. Pray you make haste." 4.3.49
Wednesday, January 6: Epiphany		
4.4	Day: Hamlet encounters Fortinbras' army headed for the Polack wars.	
Reported in letter from Hamlet to Horatio in 4.6	Night: Hamlet exchanges Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's packet.	"Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase...." 4.6.12
Thursday, January 7		
Reported by Hamlet to Horatio in 5.2	Hamlet taken by pirates.	Hamlet telling of his packet switching: "Now the next day/Was our sea-fight," 5.2.59

The Gravedigger Sequence

Act and Scene	Event	Text References
Day 1		
4.5	Ophelia's madness	Claudius: "Her brother is in secret come from France." 4.5.57
	Laertes bursts in.	
	Ophelia flower scene	
	Claudius convinces Laertes to listen.	
4.6	Horatio receives letters from sailors, reads his, and sends the sailors to Claudius.	Hamlet's letter to Horatio: "repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldest fly death." 4.6.12 Horatio to sailors: "Come, I will give you way for these your letters./And do't the speedier that you may direct me/To him from whom you brought them." 4.6.14
4.6+ (scene in Q1 only)	Horatio's interview with Gertrude, telling her of Hamlet's return	"he hath appoynted me/To meete him on the east side of the Cittie/Tomorrow morning." Q1: 3525.8
4.7	Claudius calms (and conscripts) Laertes.	
	Messenger brings letters	Hamlet's letter to Claudius: "To-

	from Hamlet.	morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes." 4.7.50
	Gertrude announces Ophelia's death.	
Day 2		
5.1	Gravedigger scene	Claudius to Laertes (Q2/F1): "Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech,/We'll put the matter to the present push./.../An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;/Till then in patience our proceeding be." 5.1.186 Q1: "This very day shall Hamlet drinke his last,/For presently we meane to send to him." Q1:3496
5.2	Hamlet tells Horatio of his sea voyage.	
	Swordfight	