**Hamlet - The soliloquies** in Act 1, sc. 2, Act 2, sc.2, Act 3, sc. 1, and Act 4, sc. 4 are Hamlet's major speeches.

They relate in that Hamlet is pondering his woes.  In the first one, he is lamenting his father's death and moreover, his mother's marriage to Claudius.

In the second one, he is expressing his frustration in himself for only talking about seeking vengeance and not doing anything yet and he says he has to be sure the ghost was telling the truth.  It is also here that he says he'll let the play that the players will perform help him determine if Claudius truly is guilty.

In the third soliloquy, Hamlet expresses his general sadness and frustration with his life and his lack of action.

The last one, in Act 4, Hamlet is still lamenting his lack of action but promises that from this point on, he will be proactive rather than reactive.

**What does each Soliloquy Reveal about Hamlet's true feelings and thoughts?**

Shakespeare's soliloquies give the reader ~ or the audience ~ the opportunity to find out what is going on in a character's mind.

Obviously, Hamlet *is*, indeed, a character, so the words and thoughts, given in each soliloquy, are those of the author ~ William Shakespeare ~ as he wants his audience to perceive his character.

The three soliloquies being considered, in this item, are those in Acts One, Two and Three, which begin as follows: 'Oh that this too solid flesh would melt ...', 'Now am I alone ...' and ~ probably the most famous soliloquy of them all ~ 'To be, or not to be ...'

## HAMLET Act 1. Scene II

Hamlet Soliloquy act 1 scene 2:

O, that this too too solid flesh would meltThaw and resolve itself into a dew!

## The first of these soliloquies

The first of these soliloquies begins with a desire, by Hamlet, for death ~ 'that this too solid flesh would melt ~ and with fearful regret that God does not condone suicide ~ 'self-slaughter'.

Hamlet's speech reveals him to be in a melancholy mood, and possibly suffering from depression, since, apart from desiring an end to his life, he states that he is finding the world 'weary, stale, flat and unprofitable'. However, it indicates another emotion. He sounds bitter and disgusted, describing the world as 'rank and gross' and weed-ridden.

His mood is explained by two occurances, to which he refers.

His father, the king, died less than two months ago, and Hamlet is grieving this man, whom he honoured and loved, comparing him to 'Hyperion'.

His mother, who should be sharing his grief, has, instead, betrayed his needs and his father's memory, by celebrating a hasty and unseemly marriage to the old king's brother, Claudius. Hamlet's distress and disgust are illustrated in his comment: 'a beast, that wants of reason, would have mourned longer'. Hamlet feels that she has sullied his father's memory ~ 'Frailty, thy name is woman', he declares. The matter torments him so much that he can hardly bear to consider it. 'Must I remember?' he asks, emotionally, then says; 'Let me not think on't'.

He is not only shocked and upset by the haste with which his mother has decided to remarry, but is disgusted by the husband she has chosen. By marrying her dead husband's brother, Hamlet believes that she is committing incest. Furthermore, Hamlet appears to dislike Claudius, whom he compares to a 'satyr'. Hamlet was sharp with him, earlier in the scene, indicating that he disliked being called his 'son', for example, and agreeing to 'obey' his mother, while mocking Claudius's comments. It is likely that he may also feel that his own place has been usurped. He has not inherited his father's crown, but rather, it is now worn by Claudius, thus rendering Hamlet powerless. Hamlet is convinced that this unfortunate situation 'cannot come to good', but feels impotent, as far as being able to do or say anything useful about it, is concerned.

He feels depressed, suicidal, fearful, regretful, grief-stricken, angry, disgusted, betrayed, frustrated, confused and impotent. His thoughts are of death and decay. This speech indicates the level of negativity to which Hamlet has fallen, as a result of his father's death, his mother's marriage to Claudius, and his own inability to do anything about either occurrence.

## HAMLET Act 2. Scene II

Now I am alone.O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!Is it not monstrous that this player here,

## The second soliloquy

The second soliloquy illustrates Hamlet's continued inability to do anything of consequence, regarding the situation in which he finds himself.

Hamlet indicates frustration, that an actor might show what appears to be real emotion ~ real grief ~ at a mere story. His act includes 'tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect' and 'all for nothing'. Yet Hamlet may not show either. He wonders how the actor would behave if he had real cause for distress, responding to his own question by stating that he would 'drown the stage with tears'. One has to assume that this is what Hamlet wants to do, and what he feels his father's death deserves, yet he is unable to respond in this way. He wonders if he is a coward, since he does not 'cleave the general ear with horrid speech' or 'make mad the guilty and appal the free'. He asks 'who calls me villain?', but the only person speaking is himself; he is accusing himself of villainy, for not speaking on behalf of his dear, recently-deceased, father.

He believes that he must be a 'pigeon-liver'd' coward, lacking 'gall', because he does not do anything about the 'bloody, bawdy villain', Claudius. He wants revenge on his 'remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless' uncle, but he can only complain to himself and do nothing. He criticises his own inaction, calling himself 'scullion', 'whore', 'drab', for not doing more in respect of his father's death; for saying nothing about a king, 'upon whose property and most dear life a damned defeat was made’; for not killing Claudius and ‘feeding his innards to the kites’.

However, there is some settling of his feelings, when Hamlet remembers that a play, reflecting the murder of Old Hamlet, by Claudius, might cause the latter to react in such a way as to prove his guilt. After all, he needs this evidence as, he says, the ghost that he has spoken with could turn out to be 'a devil', luring Hamlet, in his weak and melancholy state, to commit a sin against his possibly innocent uncle. The play, which he plans with the acting troupe, will give him the answers that he requires.

Hamlet still feels grief-stricken, frustrated and angry, but his impotent and confused cowardice is being overcome by a belief that he can do something about this matter.

## HAMLET Act 3. Scene I

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

## The third of the soliloquies is the famous 'to be, or not to be' speech.

The third of the soliloquies is the famous 'to be, or not to be' speech. Once again Hamlet is confused and contemplating death. He is wondering whether life or death is preferable;  whether it is better to allow himself to be tormented by all the wrongs that he considers 'outrageous fortune' to be bestowing on him, or to arm himself and fight against them ~ bringing them to an end. If he were to die, he feels that his troubles ~ his 'heart-ache' ~ would end. Death is still something that he finds appealing ~ ''tis a consummation devoutly to be wished'. Yet even death troubles him, as to die might mean to dream and he worries about the dreams he might have to endure ~ 'in that sleep of death what dreams may come'.

He is still contemplating suicide and considers how, by taking one's own life, with 'a bare bodkin', or dagger, one might avoid 'whips and scorns' and other hard-to-bear wrongs. However, he also wonders what after-death trials one might then have to bear ~ 'the dread of something'~ in the 'undiscover'd country' that is death.

He decides that fears concerning the puzzling and dreadful after-life, together with conscience, causes people to bear the wrongs inflicted during their life on earth, rather than commit suicide and take the risk of offending God, and arriving somewhere unknown and frightening ~ possibly the torments of hell ~ 'thus conscience does make cowards of us all'. People, he concludes, tend to think things over, lack resolve, and do nothing.

When Hamlet is remarking on such people, he means himself. He believes that his uncle is wicked and deserves to die. He believes that it is he who should end his uncle's life. But he is afraid of going to purgatory, as the spirit claiming to be his father has done. He is afraid of risking hell, by committing suicide. He is afraid of doing the wrong thing, and is inactive, partly because of his conscience. He is afraid of consequences that his religious upbringing ~ an upbringing that would have been the norm ~ have instilled in him.

Hamlet continues to feel frustrated and angry in his grief, and his feelings of impotence have returned, because, though Claudius's response to his play indicated his guilt, Hamlet still does not know what is the right thing to do ~ right in the eyes of God.