

THE MANY TEXTS OF HAMLET | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shakespeare's language can seem scary, but give it a try! *Go at your own pace, and have fun!*



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S
SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Hold on to your brains, folks. Things are about to get nerdy.

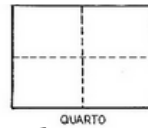
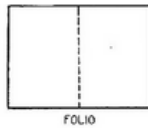
There are three very old editions of *Hamlet*: two **quartos** (think cheap paperbacks) and one **folio** (think shmancy coffee-table book). The second quarto and the folio are very, very similar, but the first quarto... it's really different. Some of the characters have different names (including some crazy ones. "Gertred" instead of "Gertrude," sure, but "Corambis" instead of "Polonius"??), and some of the speeches are a little different (more on that later!), but most importantly... it's only half as long.

We're going to look at the differences between the texts and ask you: **Which Hamlet is your Hamlet?**

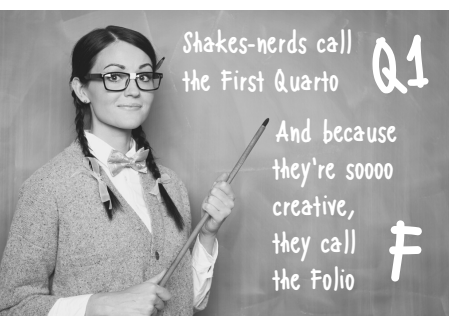


Shakespeare's works were published in two different styles of book, and the name has to do with how they were made.

A **FOLIO** is a big, fancy book, made by taking a massive sheet of paper and folding it in half down the middle.



A **QUARTO** is made by folding the paper again, making four pages, and then cutting the pages apart, so each page is half the size of a folio page. Because of the cutting, they also have rough edges. Not as fancy.



Shakes-nerds call the First Quarto **Q1**
And because they're soooo creative, they call the Folio **F**

(And the second Quarto is called Q2... more on that on page two...)

So... what's going on here?

There are basically two schools of thought about Q1:

1. **Q1 is a bootleg.** Somebody (or a group of people) went to a performance of *Hamlet* and tried to write down as much of the play as possible. But, like anyone, they didn't catch everything, and their handwriting was sloppy. Still, they took their notes to the printer and made a bunch of unauthorized copies to sell. This is called the "Bad Quarto" theory.
2. **Q1 is an acting script.** Theatres kept "promptbooks" backstage to keep everyone on track, and some people think that Q1 is based on one of those promptbooks. It's half as long as F, but the cuts aren't random: many of the most exciting scenes are just as long, and many of the slow scenes are much shorter. Maybe Q1 isn't a bootleg... maybe it's based on a version of the play that's been cut down for performance. This is called the "Alternate Version" theory.

Here is what the First Quarto looks like. Do you see any clues that it was printed quickly and cheaply?

TWO VERSIONS | ONE SCENE

The exact same things "happen" in these two scenes: It's dark, Barnardo is starting his shift as a guard, Horatio and Marcellus come in, and the other guard clocks out and leaves. That's the whole story.

BUT! This scene is twice as long in the Folio as in the First Quarto. What's going on here? Read them aloud and see how they feel to you.

First Quarto (1603)

ACT ONE - scene one
Enter BARNARDO and a SENTINEL

FIRST SENTINEL
Stand! Who is that?
BARNARDO
'Tis I.
FIRST SENTINEL
Oh, you come most carefully upon your watch.
BARNARDO
An if you meet Marcellus and Horatio,
The partners of my watch, bid them make haste.
FIRST SENTINEL
I will. See who goes there.
Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS

HORATIO
Friends to this ground.
MARCELLUS
And liegemen to the Dane.
[To the First Sentinel] Oh, farewell, honest soldier. Who hath relieved you?
FIRST SENTINEL
Barnardo hath my place. Give you good night.
Exit.

Folio (1623)

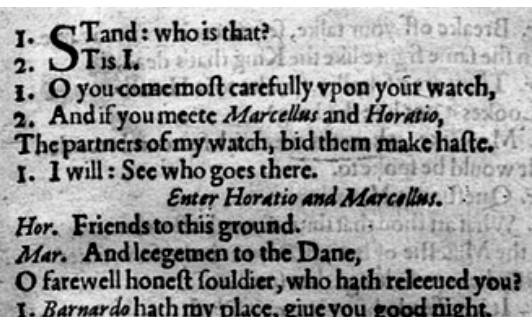
ACT ONE - scene one
Enter BARNARDO and FRANCISCO, two sentinels.

BARNARDO
Who's there?
FRANCISCO
Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.
BARNARDO
Long live the King!
FRANCISCO
Barnardo?
BARNARDO
He.
FRANCISCO
You come most carefully upon your hour.
BARNARDO
'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco.
FRANCISCO
For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold, And I am sick at heart.
BARNARDO
Have you had quiet guard?
FRANCISCO
Not a mouse stirring.
BARNARDO
Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus, The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.
Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.

FRANCISCO
I think I hear them.--Stand, ho! Who is there?
HORATIO
Friends to this ground.
MARCELLUS
And liegemen to the Dane.
FRANCISCO
Give you good night.
MARCELLUS
Oh, farewell, honest soldier. Who hath relieved you?
FRANCISCO
Barnardo hath my place. Give you good night.
Exit FRANCISCO.

Do you like one version better than the other? Why?

How does it change the scene to make it longer? What about if you make it shorter? Either way, what do you gain? What do you lose?



Don't worry. It gets nerdier...



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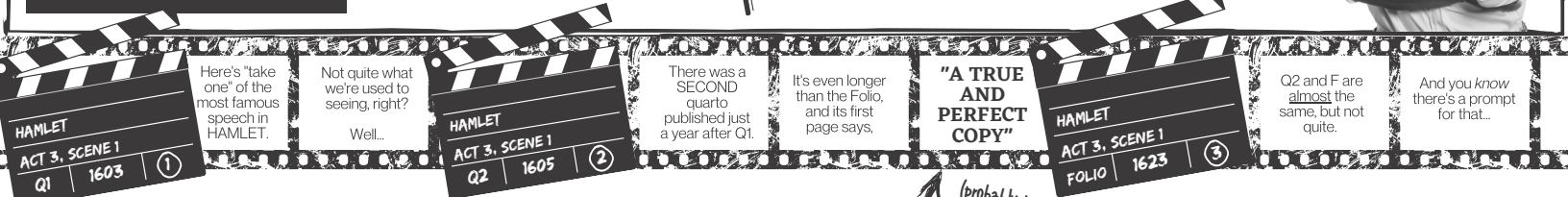
You can respond to these in any way you choose:

Write **ACT IT OUT** Talk about it
Draw **THINK ABOUT IT** ... up to you!



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HAMLET
To be, or not to be, ay, there's the point,
To die, to sleep, is that all? Ay, all.
No, to sleep, to dream, ay, marry, there it goes,
For in that dream of death, when we awake,
And borne before an everlasting judge,
From whence no passenger ever returned,
The undiscovered country, at whose sight
The happy smile, and the accursèd damned.
But for this, the joyful hope of this,
Who'd bear the scorns and flattery of the world,
Scorned by the right rich, the rich cursed of the poor,
The widow being oppressed, the orphan wronged,
The taste of hunger, or a tyrant's reign,
And thousand more calamities besides,
To grunt and sweat under this weary life,
When that he may his full quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would this endure,
But for a hope of something after death?
Which puzzles the brain, and doth confound the sense,
Which makes us rather bear those evils we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.
Ay, that. Oh, this conscience makes cowards of us all.—
Lady, in thy orisons be all my sins remembered.

Compare Q1 to the Hamlet speech we know and love (Q2 or F—take your pick!).

Look at these from a performer's perspective. What is Hamlet's objective? His tactics? What emotions are driving the speech?

Do these things change from one version to the other? Which do you think would work better for you in performance? Is a more efficient (shorter) speech better (and not just because there are fewer lines to memorize!), or do you need more words and images to do what you need to do?

Now choose a few people you know, or famous actors, and imagine you're coaching them as they rehearse one version or the other. Would you make the same choices for all performers? Or would you choose a different version for each person? Or would you put together a Frankenstein Speech—and would that be the same for all, or would you change it up?

Hamlet is not alone onstage in this scene—the king (his stepdad) and Polonius (his stepdad's buddy and his girlfriend's dad) are eavesdropping and trying to figure out if Hamlet is crazy. Ophelia (Hamlet's girlfriend, likewise concerned that he may be crazy) is also often onstage in productions. Put yourself in their shoes: If you were listening in, would you think this guy was crazy? Or would you take him seriously? Or what?



HAMLET
To be, or not to be, that is the question,
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep--
No more--and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.
Thus conscience does make cowards,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action. Soft you now,
The fair Ophelia!--Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

(probably to make it clear to customers that it's not the same as Q1.)

HAMLET
To be, or not to be, that is the question,
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep--
No more--and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
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Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the poor man's contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would these fardels bear
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
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And lose the name of action. Soft you now,
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Be all my sins remembered.

Here's the "No Fear" version... Yours might be different... There's a prompt for that...

HAMLET
The question is: is it better to be alive or dead? Is it nobler to put up with all the nasty things that luck throws your way, or to fight against all those troubles by simply putting an end to them once and for all? Dying, sleeping—that's all dying is—a sleep that ends all the heartache and shocks that life on earth gives us—that's an achievement to wish for. To die, to sleep—to sleep, maybe to dream. Ah, but there's the catch: in death's sleep who knows what kind of dreams might come, after we've put the noise and commotion of life behind us. That's certainly something to worry about. That's the consideration that makes us stretch out our sufferings so long. After all, who would put up with all life's humiliations—the abuse from superiors, the insults of arrogant men, the pangs of unrequited love, the inefficiency of the legal system, the rudeness of people in office, and the mistreatment good people have to take from bad—when you could simply take out your knife and call it quits? Who would choose to grunt and sweat through an exhausting life, unless they were afraid of something dreadful after death, the undiscovered country from which no visitor returns, which we wonder about without getting any answers from and which makes us stick to the evils we know rather than rush off to seek the ones we don't? Fear of death makes us all cowards, and our natural boldness becomes weak with too much thinking. Actions that should be carried out at once get misdirected, and stop being actions at all. But shh, here comes the beautiful Ophelia. Pretty lady, please remember me when you pray.



Find the words and phrases in Q2 and F that are different and mark them. Do they change the speech? (The rhythm? The meaning? The way you say the words?)

If you've spent any time in SIP, you know we're all about cutting (a.k.a. "editing") the text. So what's YOUR cut of "To be or not to be"?

Take Q2 or F (or some mashup of the two!) and cut it down to the length of Q1. Or cut even more! Shakespeare doesn't care. As you cut, think about how you're changing the speech—making it yours. What's the most important part of the speech to you?

Make your own cut (Write your own version! Who the heck even knows what I actually wrote in the first place? (No one. That's who.)

Try writing your own version of the speech, in your own words. Or try to explain it out loud to someone. Is it easy? Frustrating? Somewhere in between?

