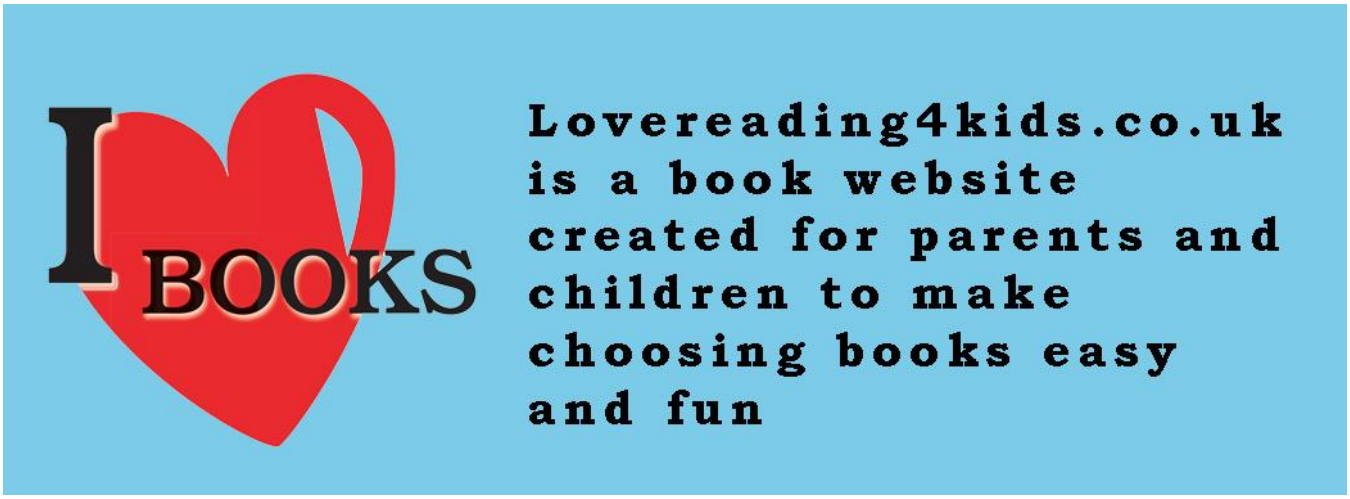


Opening extract from

To Wee or Not to Wee

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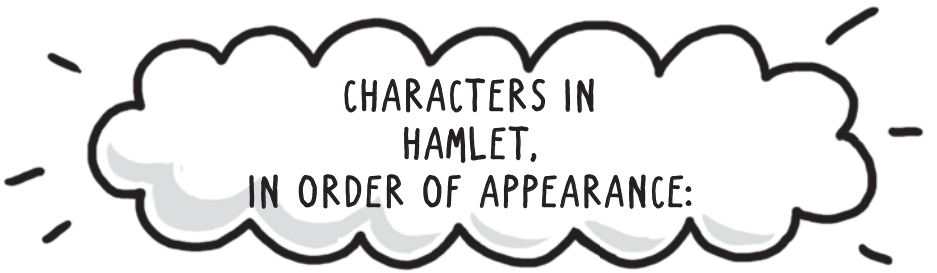
Nosy Crow

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illo 1: a page of funny shadow pics of different skulls



Hamlet, Prince of Denmark
Gertrude, Hamlet's mum, Queen of Denmark
Claudius, Hamlet's Uncle, the dead King's brother
Horatio, Hamlet's best friend
The Ghost, Hamlet's dad, once King of Denmark
Ophelia, Hamlet's girlfriend
The Actors, who perform Hamlet's play
Polonius, Ophelia's dad and Claudius's best friend
The Gravediggers
Yorick, once the court jester, now a skull
Laertes, Polonius's son; and Ophelia's brother
Fortinbras, Prince of Norway and last man standing

One time when we were playing Monopoly at Maisie's house we couldn't even get started because Zach COULD NOT decide if he wanted to be the hat or the car. And he kept saying stuff like, "But I like both. What should I do?" and "What if I pick the car and then I lose?" and "What if Jodi gets the car and she wins?"

Then Maisie's mum came in and asked us if we would like pepperoni on our pizza and I said yes and so did Maisie and Jodi but Zach said that he wasn't sure. And then he put his head in his hands because he couldn't decide about the car OR the hat OR

the pepperoni and it was



So that's when I told Zach that he was being EXACTLY like HAMLET out of the Shakespeare play. And Zach said that he WASN'T and Maisie's mum burst out laughing and said that he was, actually. Then Zach said that he



So I asked Zach if he knew who Hamlet was and he said no.

So that's when I told Zach that Hamlet was the Prince of Denmark who had been at university for about twenty years because he couldn't decide what to be when he grew up so just kept going back to college and doing LOADS of stuff like history and biology and hairdressing.

But one day when Hamlet came home to get his mum to do his washing for him he found out that his dad, the King of Denmark, had died. And then his mum told him that she was going on a date with his Uncle Claudius and that there was some left-over

illo 2: claudius proposing on knee to hamlets mum

lasagne in the fridge.

Hamlet was FURIOUS because his mum didn't even seem BOTHERED that his dad had died and also because she was going on a date with HIS UNCLE (which was TOTALLY WEIRD even though she was pretending that it wasn't).

Hamlet's mum and his Uncle Claudius got back from their date JUST in time for the king's funeral and as SOON as the funeral finished Claudius went down on one knee and PROPOSED to Hamlet's mum! Then he told all the funeral guests to just stay sitting down because they were about to get MARRIED and he was going to be the KING OF DENMARK!

Hamlet was totally SHOCKED because his uncle was about to become

his STEP-DAD and also because HE was supposed to become King of Denmark. And he probably should have grabbed the minister's microphone and shouted, "Mum! You CAN'T marry Dad's BROTHER! That's disgusting!" and also "I'M THE KING NOW!"

But Hamlet didn't shout any of those things. He just sat there trying to decide what to do to stop the wedding until the minister said, "I now pronounce you husband and wife," and it was too late.

After the Funeral-Wedding Hamlet went up to the castle roof and moaned for HOURS to

his best friend, Horatio (who was very good at listening which was a good thing because Hamlet talked a LOT).

Hamlet kept asking Horatio LOADS of questions like "What do you think I should do about the King thing?" and "Should I get the castle locks changed so Claudius can't move in?" and "Should I become a hairdresser?"

But Horatio never got a chance to answer ANY of the questions because as SOON as Hamlet asked a question he ALWAYS asked ANOTHER one right away (which was very annoying).

illo 3: funny pic hamlet and hamlets ghost dad

But then all of a sudden a ghostly voice said, "You've been eating MY lasagne! I can smell it on your breath."

And Hamlet

GASPED

because he KNEW it was his Ghost Dad before he even turned around because lasagne was his dad's most favourite thing.

Once the ghost stopped going on about never being able to eat lasagne EVER again, he said, "Hamlet, I am here to tell you that I was MURDERED by my own BROTHER!"

And then the ghost told Hamlet that Claudius had crept up on him when he was sleeping in the garden and poured POISON

in his EAR! And that his ear was still a bit sore and itchy even though he was dead.

And then he said, "I need you to do two VERY IMPORTANT things for me. And you must do them because I am your Ghost Dad."

That's when he told Hamlet that he must AVENGE his death (which meant he wanted him to kill his uncle) and also that he was to bring him some lasagne so he could smell it and try to lick the air. And then he disappeared.

"What are you going to do?" said Horatio.

But Hamlet said that he didn't know and

that he needed a drink of juice first.

Then when he'd had his juice Horatio said, "What are you going to DO, Hamlet?" But Hamlet said that he wasn't sure and that he needed to finish his jigsaw first (even though he probably shouldn't have started a jigsaw when he was in the middle of trying to decide if he was going avenge his Ghost Dad's death).

So Horatio waited until Hamlet finished his jigsaw and then asked him AGAIN. But Hamlet spotted a pigeon and said he needed to draw a picture of it first before he decided what to do. So Horatio just stopped asking

illo 4: funny pic hamlet in his pants

him because he was OBVIOUSLY avoiding the question and had NO IDEA what he was going to do because he was a bit of a nightmare like that.

Hamlet could NEVER make his mind up about ANYTHING. And one time he actually went to school in just his pants and got sent home because he couldn't decide what to wear.

Hamlet said he needed to be sure the ghost was telling the truth before he did the avenging and that he was going to



on his uncle to see if he was acting all GUILTY and SUSPICIOUS like a Brother Murderer should.

So Hamlet decided to PRETEND he was in a terrible mood and be MEAN to EVERYONE, even his girlfriend, Ophelia, so

that they would be so shocked by his bad behaviour that they wouldn't notice the



Hamlet coughed on ALL the scrambled eggs at breakfast, left ALL the royal toilet seats up and made up a song about Claudius's best friend Polonius looking like an evil guinea pig and sang it to him (even though Polonius was Ophelia's dad so that was a bit of a bad idea).

EVERYONE was talking about how RUDE

Hamlet was now. And when anyone caught him SPYING on his uncle he would just call them the WORST name he could think of and they'd forget all about the spying.

And when poor Ophelia asked Hamlet if he still wanted to marry her, Hamlet said that he DEFINITELY DIDN'T and that she should probably just go away and become a NUN and that made Ophelia run away crying because she



Hamlet and also because she'd already

illo 5: actors with their funny wigs slipped down faces in dress rehearsal

bought her wedding dress and it was non-refundable.

That's when Hamlet realised that he didn't have to pretend to be in a terrible mood any more because he really WAS in a terrible mood because he kept thinking about MURDER and AVENGING all the time and he couldn't make up his mind about Claudius.

But one day, Hamlet got an IDEA while he was watching the Royal Actors rehearse. Watching the actors rehearse was one of his and Horatio's favourite things to do because the actors were TERRIBLE and always forgot their lines so it was a good laugh. And sometimes their wigs slipped down their faces while they were talking and they just had to leave them there because it was a DRESS REHEARSAL which means you can't stop even if your wig is covering your

face and no one can hear what you're saying, you just have to keep going.

So anyway, Hamlet's IDEA was to write a NEW PLAY about a man who kills a king by pouring poison in his ear while he's sleeping and to make the actors do that one to see if Claudius would

FREAK OUT

when he saw it.

But the actors didn't want to do it because there were loads of spelling mistakes in the script because Hamlet had had to write it

really quickly. So Hamlet showed the actors a bag of gold and a voucher he got for his birthday for an all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet and the actors said they'd do it.

Hamlet STARED at Claudius while he watched the play (which was pretty hard to do because Claudius kept making kissy sounds at Hamlet's mum and pinching her cheeks which made Hamlet feel violently sick).

But then Claudius STOPPED making kissy sounds and leaned forwards in his seat as he watched one of the actors pour poison into the sleeping king's ear.

Claudius went as white as a SHEET and shouted,



and then he ran away.

THAT'S when Hamlet knew that the ghost WAS his Ghost Dad and that it had been telling the TRUTH about the Brother Murder.

Everything got a bit out of hand after that. Hamlet's mum started screaming and crying (even though she had no idea what was going on and she was just being SUPER dramatic) so Hamlet told her to go to her room and that he'd meet her there in a minute because he had to go to the toilet first.

But Hamlet DIDN'T go to the toilet because he didn't need to go and he'd only pretended that he needed to go because he was on his way to KILL CLAUDIUS and AVENGE his father's death!

Hamlet found Claudius praying with his eyes closed so he raised his dagger in the air. But then he changed his mind. He didn't really want to kill anyone while they were saying their prayers, but he DID want to avenge his dad. So he probably should have just gone to the police about it but I suppose people didn't really do that in Olden Times as much and they mostly just went and got the swords out.

So anyway, Hamlet just stood and talked to himself for about half an hour until he couldn't even remember what he was doing there. And then he went to see his mum for a cuddle because his brain was hurting.

But Gertrude wouldn't give him a cuddle because he tried to tell her what Claudius was REALLY like and she didn't like hearing that so she kept covering her ears and saying,

"LA LA LA LA
I'M NOT
LISTENING
TO YOU
LA LA LA LA LA!"

And when Hamlet tried to take her hands off her ears she SCREAMED THE WHOLE

illo 6: hamlet looking suspiciously at the curtain, shaped person behind it feet sticking out of the curtain

PALACE DOWN because she was probably the most dramatic person that had ever lived.

Then Hamlet noticed something moving behind one of the curtains and he thought it was Claudius SPYING on them so he took his dagger and stuck it RIGHT through the curtain. But it wasn't Claudius. It was Polonius, Claudius's best friend and Ophelia's dad, who had been spying. And now he was dead. But to be fair, that HAD been a pretty stupid place to stand. So it wasn't really ALL Hamlet's fault.

That's when Hamlet's mum looked a bit sad for Hamlet and it was probably because Hamlet just couldn't do anything right. I mean, EVENTUALLY he made a decision and curtain-stabbed someone and it wasn't even the RIGHT person!

Hamlet tried to get out of it by saying that he thought he'd heard a rat, and that he'd being trying to stab that. But nobody believed him. So he left the castle for a bit.





But then Hamlet found out that Ophelia had been so upset about her dad that she'd run away and tripped and fallen into a river and died. And he got so upset that he just began wandering around graveyards with Horatio because he was getting a bit OBSESSED with killing and dead people and worms. And it didn't help when he saw a SKULL.



"Who's wormy skull is that?" he asked the gravediggers.

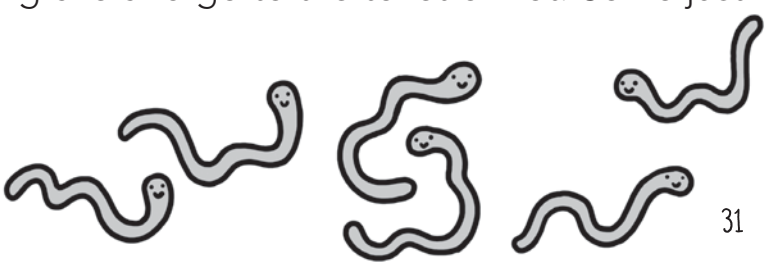
illo 7: hamlet talking to skull

i will make space for it!

"That's Yorick, your dad's old jester from years ago when you were a baby."

Well, as SOON as the gravediggers said that Hamlet screamed, "I KNEW HIM, Horatio!" and jumped RIGHT into the grave and began SPEAKING to the skull and asking it loads of questions like, "What should I do about EVERYTHING?" and just, "Why?" And then he told it he needed a wee.

But by now Hamlet was SO BAD at making ANY decisions that he couldn't even decide whether he should get out of the wormy grave and go to the toilet of not. So he just



stood there in the grave wailing at the skull, "To WEE … or NOT to wee? That is the question."

But then the gravediggers said that he'd better NOT wee in the grave because they weren't actually finished digging it yet. So Hamlet said sorry and got out.

That's when he saw his mum and Claudius. And Polonius's son, Laertes, was there too because he'd come home from university for Ophelia's funeral. And when he saw Hamlet he said that he was going to BATTER him because of his dad and sister.

Before Hamlet even had a chance to

BLINK Laertes jumped on him because Laertes was not like Hamlet. Laertes just did things and didn't really think about them first. But Laertes probably SHOULD have thought about it a bit because he jumped on Hamlet so hard that they both ended up in the grave, covered in worms, and Hamlet even weed himself a bit.

Laertes jumped out of the grave because he didn't want to get wee on his new funeral trousers and then he challenged Hamlet to a SWORD FIGHT back at the castle, once Hamlet had got changed.

Claudius LOVED the idea of the sword

illo 8: funny pic of hamlet in his pj bottoms holding a really rubbish sword

fight because he wanted Hamlet dead. So he smeared POISON all over Laertes' sword because he was obsessed with killing people with poison. And he even had a poisoned glass of wine ready to give to Hamlet in case the sword didn't work.

As soon as Hamlet changed his trousers Claudius gave him a rubbish sword and told him good luck.

There was a

HUGE

crowd waiting and some of them were pointing at Hamlet because he was wearing pyjama bottoms since that's all he'd been able to find at the castle because someone (probably Claudius) had chucked out all his trousers.

Hamlet looked up at his mum and she waved LOADS and shouted down that she'd missed him and that she hoped

he won. But then Claudius kissed her on the lips for ages so she would stop saying nice things to Hamlet because he didn't like it.

Hamlet tried to tell Laertes that he hadn't actually meant to stab his dad through a curtain, and that it was a bit of an accident, but Laertes was too ANGRY to listen. He swung his sword and cut Hamlet's finger. So Hamlet fought back as hard as he could with the rubbish sword. And he did so well that Laertes tripped and sliced his leg with his OWN sword.

Gertrude got a bit excited that her son was doing so well so she picked up the glass

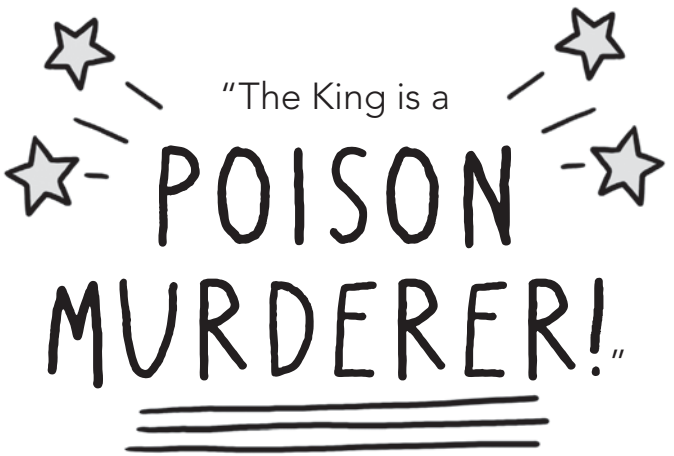
Claudius had meant for Hamlet and said, "CHEERS TO MY SON!"

"NOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

shouted Claudius. But it was too late. Hamlet's mum gulped down the WHOLE glass because fizzy wine was her favourite and she hadn't had any since Christmas.

Just then Hamlet realised that the cut on his finger was burning and that the burning was spreading up his arm and into his chest. He looked at the cut on Laertes' leg and saw that he was in serious pain, too.

Then Laertes fell to the ground and cried,



Then Hamlet's mum clutched her throat and toppled off her throne into the buffet.

And that's when Hamlet realised that they were ALL poisoned and that it was ALL CLAUDIUS'S FAULT!

So that's when Hamlet EVENTUALLY decided to avenge his Ghost Dad's murder and he poison-stabbed Claudius!

And then Hamlet died too.

But then he opened his eyes and said, "Horatio. Will you tell the story of me and what happened to me for ever, even if it makes you cry?"

And Horatio said that he would.

And then Hamlet died again.

But then he opened his eyes AGAIN and said, "Horatio. Do you think I would have been a good hairdresser?"

And Horatio said that he thought he would have been, even though he didn't really

illo 9: hamlet lying down dead across spread, but one eye open chatting

mean it because his hair was still longer on one side than it was on the other from when he'd let Hamlet cut it. But that wasn't the right time to bring it up.

And then Hamlet died again.

But he kept opening his eyes and saying more things because even when he was almost dead Hamlet could NOT stop talking and saying one more thing and it went on like that for about forty-five minutes.

Once Hamlet was DEFINITELY DEAD his cousin, Fortinbras, came to be the king. And he let Horatio and loads of homeless people live in the palace too because he

illo 10: 2 bowls of lasagne left in the spooky castle

was a really nice person.

And even though Horatio never saw the ghost of Hamlet or Hamlet's dad again, he always made lasagne on a Thursday and left two bowls in the spooky bit of the castle before he went to his bed.

When I finished the story, Jodi looked at Zach and said, "Zach. Do you want to end up like Hamlet?"

And Zach's eyes went REALLY WIDE. And then he said that he was DEFINITELY going to be the HAT and that he DEFINITELY wanted pepperoni on his pizza. And also that he was going to decide EVERYTHING from now on.

So I said, "Great! What film do you want to watch later then?"

And Zach didn't say anything and then he said he needed to go to the toilet. And we all KNEW it was because he couldn't decide.

And we all burst out laughing and couldn't stop. Especially when Maisie squealed, "TO WEE OR NOT TO WEE?"