

Hamlet (Branagh 1996) Character List

Character Name/Actor Photo	Description
<p>Hamlet (Kenneth Branagh)</p> 	<p>The Prince of Denmark, the title character, and the protagonist. About thirty years old at the start of the play, Hamlet is the son of Queen Gertrude and the late King Hamlet, and the nephew of the present king, Claudius. Hamlet is melancholy, bitter, and cynical, full of hatred for his uncle's scheming and disgust for his mother's sexuality. A reflective and thoughtful young man who has studied at the University of Wittenberg, Hamlet is often indecisive and hesitant, but at other times prone to rash and impulsive acts.</p>
<p>King Claudius (Derek Jacobi)</p> 	<p>The King of Denmark, Hamlet's uncle, and the play's antagonist. The villain of the play, Claudius is a calculating, ambitious politician, driven by his sexual appetites and his lust for power, but he occasionally shows signs of guilt and human feeling—his love for Gertrude, for instance, seems sincere.</p>
<p>Queen Gertrude (Julie Christie)</p> 	<p>The Queen of Denmark, Hamlet's mother, recently married to Claudius. Gertrude loves Hamlet deeply, but she is a shallow, weak woman who seeks affection and status more urgently than moral rectitude or truth.</p>
<p>Polonius (Richard Briers)</p> 	<p>The Lord Chamberlain of Claudius's court, a pompous, conniving old man. Polonius is the father of Laertes and Ophelia.</p>

<p>Ophelia (Kate Winslet)</p>  A portrait of Ophelia, played by Kate Winslet, wearing a red dress with a white collar and a white scarf.	<p>Polonius's daughter, a beautiful young woman with whom Hamlet has been in love. Ophelia is a sweet and innocent young girl, who obeys her father and her brother, Laertes. Dependent on men to tell her how to behave, she gives in to Polonius's schemes to spy on Hamlet. Even in her lapse into madness and death, she remains maidenly, singing songs about flowers and finally drowning in the river amid the flower garlands she had gathered.</p>
<p>Horatio (Nicholas Farrell)</p>  A portrait of Horatio, played by Nicholas Farrell, wearing a dark, patterned coat and a white shirt.	<p>Hamlet's close friend, who studied with the prince at the university in Wittenberg. Horatio is loyal and helpful to Hamlet throughout the play. After Hamlet's death, Horatio remains alive to tell Hamlet's story.</p>
<p>Laertes (Michael Maloney)</p>  A portrait of Laertes, played by Michael Maloney, wearing a white military-style uniform with gold epaulettes.	<p>Polonius's son and Ophelia's brother, a young man who spends much of the play in France. Passionate and quick to action, Laertes is clearly a foil for the reflective Hamlet.</p>
<p>Fortinbras (Rufus Sewell)</p>  A portrait of Fortinbras, played by Rufus Sewell, wearing a dark, patterned coat and a white shirt, holding a sword.	<p>The young Prince of Norway, whose father the king (also named Fortinbras) was killed by Hamlet's father (also named Hamlet). Now Fortinbras wishes to attack Denmark to avenge his father's honor, making him another foil for Prince Hamlet.</p>
<p>Rosencrantz (Timothy Spall) and Guildenstern (Reece Dinsdale)</p>  A portrait of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, played by Timothy Spall and Reece Dinsdale, wearing dark, patterned coats and white shirts.	<p>Two slightly bumbling courtiers, former friends of Hamlet from Wittenberg, who are summoned by Claudius and Gertrude to discover the cause of Hamlet's strange behavior.</p>

